

The Treasure eBook

The Treasure by Kathleen Norris

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Contents

The Treasure eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	14
Page 7.....	16
Page 8.....	18
Page 9.....	20
Page 10.....	22
Page 11.....	24
Page 12.....	26
Page 13.....	27
Page 14.....	28
Page 15.....	30
Page 16.....	32
Page 17.....	34
Page 18.....	36
Page 19.....	38
Page 20.....	40
Page 21.....	42
Page 22.....	44



[Page 23..... 46](#)

[Page 24..... 48](#)

[Page 25..... 49](#)

[Page 26..... 51](#)

[Page 27..... 53](#)

[Page 28..... 55](#)

[Page 29..... 57](#)

[Page 30..... 59](#)

[Page 31..... 61](#)

[Page 32..... 63](#)

[Page 33..... 65](#)

[Page 34..... 67](#)

[Page 35..... 69](#)

[Page 36..... 71](#)

[Page 37..... 73](#)

[Page 38..... 75](#)

[Page 39..... 77](#)

[Page 40..... 79](#)

[Page 41..... 81](#)

[Page 42..... 83](#)

[Page 43..... 85](#)

[Page 44..... 87](#)

[Page 45..... 89](#)

[Page 46..... 91](#)

[Page 47..... 93](#)

[Page 48..... 95](#)



Page 49..... 97
Page 50..... 99
Page 51..... 100
Page 52..... 102

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER I		1
CHAPTER II		11
CHAPTER III		18
CHAPTER IV		29
CHAPTER V		41



Page 1

CHAPTER I

Lizzie, who happened to be the Salisbury's one servant at the time, was wasteful. It was almost her only fault, in Mrs. Salisbury's eyes, for such trifles as her habit of becoming excited and "saucy," in moments of domestic stress, or to ask boldly for other holidays than her alternate Sunday and Thursday afternoons, or to resent at all times the intrusion of any person, even her mistress, into her immaculate kitchen, might have been overlooked. Mrs. Salisbury had been keeping house in a suburban town for twenty years; she was not considered an exacting mistress. She was perfectly willing to forgive Lizzie what was said in the hurried hours before the company dinner or impromptu lunch, and to let Lizzie slip out for a walk with her sister in the evening, and to keep out of the kitchen herself as much as was possible. So much might be conceded to a girl who was honest and clean, industrious, respectable, and a fair cook.

But the wastefulness was a serious matter. Mrs. Salisbury was a careful and an experienced manager; she resented waste; indeed, she could not afford to tolerate it. She liked to go into the kitchen herself every morning, to eye the contents of icebox and pantry, and decide upon needed stores. Enough butter, enough cold meat for dinner, enough milk for a nourishing soup, eggs and salad for luncheon—what about potatoes?

Lizzie deliberately frustrated this house-wifely ambition. She flounced and muttered when other hands than her own were laid upon her icebox. She turned on rushing faucets, rattled dishes in her pan. Yet Mrs. Salisbury felt that she must personally superintend these matters, because Lizzie was so wasteful. The girl had not been three months in the Salisbury family before all bills for supplies soared alarmingly.

This was all wrong. Mrs. Salisbury fretted over it a few weeks, then confided her concern to her husband. But Kane Salisbury would not listen to the details. He scowled at the introduction of the topic, glanced restlessly at his paper, murmured that Lizzie might be "fired"; and, when Mrs. Salisbury had resolutely bottled up her seething discontent inside of herself, she sometimes heard him murmuring, "Bad—bad—management" as he sat chewing his pipe-stem on the dark porch or beside the fire.

Alexandra, the eighteen-year-old daughter of the house, was equally incurious and unreasonable about domestic details.

"But, honestly, Mother, you know you're afraid of Lizzie, and she knows it," Alexandra would declare gaily; "I can't tell you how I'd manage her, because she's not my servant, but I know I would do something!"



Page 2

Beauty and intelligence gave Alexandra, even at eighteen, a certain serene poise and self-reliance that lifted her above the old-fashioned topics of “trouble with girls,” and housekeeping, and marketing. Alexandra touched these subjects under the titles of “budgets,” “domestic science,” and “efficiency.” Neither she nor her mother recognized the old, homely subjects under their new names, and so the daughter felt a lack of interest, and the mother a lack of sympathy, that kept them from understanding each other. Alexandra, ready to meet and conquer all the troubles of a badly managed world, felt that one small home did not present a very terrible problem. Poor Mrs. Salisbury only knew that it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep a general servant at all in a family of five, and that her husband’s salary, of something a little less than four thousand dollars a year, did not at all seem the princely sum that they would have thought it when they were married on twenty dollars a week.

From the younger members of the family, Fred, who was fifteen, and Stanford, three years younger, she expected, and got, no sympathy. The three young Salisburys found money interesting only when they needed it for new gowns, or matinee tickets, or tennis rackets, or some kindred purchase. They needed it desperately, asked for it, got it, spent it, and gave it no further thought. It meant nothing to them that Lizzie was wasteful. It was only to their mother that the girl’s slipshod ways were becoming an absolute trial.

Lizzie, very neat and respectful, would interfere with Mrs. Salisbury’s plan of a visit to the kitchen by appearing to ask for instructions before breakfast was fairly over. When the man of the house had gone, and before the children appeared, Lizzie would inquire:

“Just yourselves for dinner, Mrs. Salisbury?”

“Just ourselves. Let—me—see—” Mrs. Salisbury would lay down her newspaper, stir her cooling coffee. The memory of last night’s vegetables would rise before her; there must be baked onions left, and some of the corn.

“There was some lamb left, wasn’t there?” she might ask.

Amazement on Lizzie’s part.

“That wasn’t such an awful big leg, Mrs. Salisbury. And the boys had Perry White in, you know. There’s just a little plateful left. I gave Sam the bones.”

Mrs. Salisbury could imagine the plateful: small, neat, cold.

“Sometimes I think that if you left the joint on the platter, Lizzie, there are scrapings, you know—” she might suggest.

“I scraped it,” Lizzie would answer briefly, conclusively.



“Well, that for lunch, then, for Miss Sandy and me,” Mrs. Salisbury would decide hastily.
“I’ll order something fresh for dinner. Were there any vegetables left?”

“There were a few potatoes, enough for lunch,” Lizzie would admit guardedly.

“I’ll order vegetables, too, then!” And Mrs. Salisbury would sigh. Every housekeeper knows that there is no economy in ordering afresh for every meal.



Page 3

“And we need butter—”

“Butter again! Those two pounds gone?”

“There’s a little piece left, not enough, though. And I’m on my last cake of soap, and we need crackers, and vanilla, and sugar, unless you’re not going to have a dessert, and salad oil—”

“Just get me a pencil, will you?” This was as usual. Mrs. Salisbury would pencil a long list, would bite her lips thoughtfully, and sigh as she read it over.

“Asparagus to-night, then. And, Lizzie, don’t serve so much melted butter with it as you did last time; there must have been a cupful of melted butter. And, another time, save what little scraps of vegetables there are left; they help out so at lunch—”

“There wasn’t a saucerful of onions left last night,” Lizzie would assert, “and two cobs of corn, after I’d had my dinner. You couldn’t do much with those. And, as for butter on the asparagus”—Lizzie was very respectful, but her tone would rise aggrievedly—“it was every bit eaten, Mrs. Salisbury!”

“Yes, I know. But we mustn’t let these young vandals eat us out of house and home, you know,” the mistress would say, feeling as if she were doing something contemptibly small. And, worsted, she would return to her paper. “But I don’t care, we cannot afford it!” Mrs. Salisbury would say to herself, when Lizzie had gone, and very thoughtfully she would write out a check payable to “cash.” “I used to use up little odds and ends so deliciously, years ago!” she sometimes reflected disconsolately. “And Kane always says we never live as well now as we did then! He always praised my dinners.”

Nowadays Mr. Salisbury was not so well satisfied. Lizzie rang the changes upon roasted and fried meats, boiled and creamed vegetables, baked puddings and canned fruits contentedly enough. She made cup cake and sponge cake, sponge cake and cup cake all the year round. Nothing was ever changed, no unexpected flavor ever surprised the palates of the Salisbury family. May brought strawberry shortcake, December cottage puddings, cold beef always made a stew; creamed codfish was never served without baked potatoes. The Salisbury table was a duplicate of some millions of other tables, scattered the length and breadth of the land.

“And still the bills go up!” fretted Mrs. Salisbury.

“Well, why don’t you fire her, Sally?” her husband asked, as he had asked of almost every maid they had ever had—of lazy Annies, and untidy Selmas, and ignorant Katies. And, as always, Mrs. Salisbury answered patiently:



“Oh, Kane, what’s the use? It simply means my going to Miss Crosby’s again, and facing that awful row of them, and beginning that I have three grown children, and no other help—”

“Mother, have you ever had a perfect maid?” Sandy had asked earnestly years before. Her mother spent a moment in reflection, arresting the hand with which she was polishing silver. Alexandra was only sixteen then, and mother and daughter were bridging a gap when there was no maid at all in the Salisbury kitchen.



Page 4

“Well, there was Libby,” the mother answered at length, “the colored girl I had when you were born. She really was perfect, in a way. She was a clean darky, and such a cook! Daddy talks still of her fried chicken and blueberry pies! And she loved company, too. But, you see, Grandma Salisbury was with us then, and she paid a little girl to look after you, so Libby had really nothing but the kitchen and dining-room to care for. Afterward, just before Fred came, she got lazy and ugly, and I had to let her go. Canadian Annie was a wonderful girl, too,” pursued Mrs. Salisbury, “but we only had her two months. Then she got a place where there were no children, and left on two days’ notice. And when I think of the others!—the Hungarian girl who boiled two pairs of Fred’s little brown socks and darkened the entire wash, sheets and napkins and all! And the colored girl who drank, and the girl who gave us boiled rice for dessert whenever I forgot to tell her anything else! And then Dad and I never will forget the woman who put pudding sauce on his mutton—dear me, dear me!” And Mrs. Salisbury laughed out at the memory. “Between her not knowing one thing, and not understanding a word we said, she was pretty trying all around!” she presently added. “And, of course, the instant you have them really trained they leave; and that’s the end of that! One left me the day Stan was born, and another—and she was a nice girl, too—simply departed when you three were all down with scarlet fever, and left her bed unmade, and the tea cup and saucer from her breakfast on the end of the kitchen table! Luckily we had a wonderful nurse, and she simply took hold and saved the day.”

“Isn’t it a wonder that there isn’t a training school for house servants?” Sandy had inquired, youthful interest in her eye.

“There’s no such thing,” her mother assured her positively, “as getting one who knows her business! And why? Why, because all the smart girls prefer to go into factories, and slave away for three or four dollars a week, instead of coming into good homes! Do Pearsall and Thompson ever have any difficulty in getting girls for the glove factory? Never! There’s a line of them waiting, a block long, every time they advertise. But you may make up your mind to it, dear, if you get a good cook, she’s wasteful or she’s lazy, or she’s irritable, or dirty, or she won’t wait on table, or she slips out at night, and laughs under street lamps with some man or other! She’s always on your mind, and she’s always an irritation.”

“It just shows what a hopelessly stupid class you have to deal with, Mother,” the younger Sandy had said. But at eighteen, she was not so sure.

Alexandra frankly hated housework, and she did not know how to cook. She did not think it strange that it was hard to find a clever and well-trained young woman who would gladly spend all her time in housework and cooking for something less than three hundred dollars a year. Her eyes were beginning to be opened to the immense moral and social questions that lie behind the simple preference of American girls to work for men rather than for women. Household work was women’s sphere, Sandy reasoned, and they had made it a sphere insufferable to other women. Something was wrong.



Page 5

Sandy was too young, and too mentally independent, to enter very sympathetically into her mother's side of the matter. The younger woman's attitude was tinged with affectionate contempt, and when the stupidity of the maid, or the inconvenience of having no maid at all, interfered with the smooth current of her life, or her busy comings and goings, she became impatient and intolerant.

"Other people manage!" said Alexandra.

"Who, for instance?" demanded her mother, in calm exasperation.

"Oh, everyone—the Bernards, the Watermans! Doilies and finger bowls, and Elsie in a cap and apron!"

"But Doctor and Mrs. Bernard are old people, dear, and the Watermans are three business women—no lunch, no children, very little company!"

"Well, Grace Elliot, then!"

"With two maids, Sandy. That's a very different matter!"

"And is there any reason why we shouldn't have two?" asked Sandy, with youthful logic.

"Ah, well, there you come to the question of expense, dear!" And Mrs. Salisbury dismissed the subject with a quiet air of triumph.

But of course the topic came up again. It is the one household ghost that is never laid in such a family. Sometimes Kane Salisbury himself took a part in it.

"Do you mean to tell me," he once demanded, in the days of the dreadfully incompetent maids who preceded Lizzie, "that it is becoming practically impossible to get a good general servant?"

"Well, I wish you'd try it yourself," his wife answered, grimly quiet. "It's just about wearing me out! I don't know what has become of the good old maid-of-all-work," she presently pursued, with a sigh, "but she has simply vanished from the face of the earth. Even the greenest girls fresh from the other side begin to talk about having the washing put out, and to have extra help come in to wash windows and beat rugs! I don't know what we're coming to—you teach them to tell a blanket from a sheet, and how to boil coffee, and set a table, and then away they go to get more money somewhere. Dear me! Your father's mother used to have girls who had the wash on the line before eight o'clock—"

"Yes, but then Grandma's house was simpler," Sandy contributed, a little doubtfully. "You know, Grandma never put on any style, Mother—"



“Her house was always one of the most comfortable, most hospitable— ”

“Yes, I know, Mother!” Alexandra persisted eagerly. “But Fanny never had to answer the door, and Grandma used to let her leave the tablecloth on between meals—Grandma told me so herself!—and no fussing with doilies, or service plates under the soup plates, or glass saucers for dessert. And Grandma herself used to help wipe dishes, or sometimes set the table, and make the beds, if there was company—”

“That may be,” Mrs. Salisbury had the satisfaction of answering coldly. “Perhaps she did, although *I* never remember hearing her say so. But my mother always had colored servants, and I never saw her so much as dust the piano!”



Page 6

“I suppose we couldn’t simplify things, Sally? Cut out some of the extra touches?” suggested the head of the house.

Mrs. Salisbury merely shook her head, compressing her lips firmly. It was quite difficult enough to keep things “nice,” with two growing boys in the family, without encountering such opposition as this. A day or two later she went into New Troy, the nearest big city, and came back triumphantly with Lizzie.

And at first Lizzie really did seem perfection. It was some weeks before Mrs. Salisbury realized that Lizzie was not truthful; absolutely reliable in money matters, yet Lizzie could not be believed in the simplest statement. Tasteless oatmeal, Lizzie glibly asseverated, had been well salted; weak coffee, or coffee as strong as brown paint, were the fault of the pot. Lizzie, rushing through dinner so that she might get out; Lizzie throwing out cold vegetables that “weren’t worth saving”; Lizzie growing snappy and noisy at the first hint of criticism, somehow seemed worse sometimes than no servant at all.

“I wonder—if we moved into New Troy, Kane,” Mrs. Salisbury mused, “and got one of those wonderful modern apartments, with a gas stove, and a dumbwaiter, and hardwood floors, if Sandy and I couldn’t manage everything? With a woman to clean and dinners downtown now and then, and a waitress in for occasions.”

“And me jumping up to change the salad plates, Mother!” Alexandra put in briskly. “And a pile of dishes to do every night!”

“Gosh, let’s not move into the city—” protested Stanford. “No tennis, no canoe, no baseball!”

“And we know everyone in River Falls, we’d have to keep coming out here for parties!” Sandy added.

“Well,” Mrs. Salisbury sighed, “I admit that it is too much of a problem for me!” she said. “I know that I married your father on twenty dollars a week,” she told the children severely, “and we lived in a dear little cottage, only eighteen dollars a month, and I did all my own work! And never in our lives have we lived so well. But the minute you get inexperienced help, your bills simply double, and inexperienced help means simply one annoyance after another. I give it up!”

“Well, I’ll tell you, Mother,” Alexandra offered innocently; “perhaps we don’t systematize enough ourselves. It ought to be all so well arranged and regulated that a girl would know what she was expected to do, and know that you had a perfect right to call her down for wasting or slighting things. Why couldn’t women—a bunch of women, say—”



“Why couldn’t they form a set of household rules and regulations?” her mother intercepted smoothly. “Because—it’s just one of the things that you young, inexperienced people can talk very easily about,” she interrupted herself to say with feeling, “but it never seems to occur to any one of you that every household has its different demands and regulations. The market fluctuates, the size of a family changes—fixed laws are impossible! No. Lizzie is no worse than lots of others, better than the average. I shall hold on to her!”



Page 7

“Mrs. Sargent says that all these unnecessary demands have been instituted and insisted upon by women,” said Alexandra. “She says that the secret of the whole trouble is that women try to live above their class, and make one servant appear to do the work of three—”

The introduction of Mrs. Sargent’s name was not a happy one.

“Ellen Sargent,” said Mrs. Salisbury icily, “is not a lady herself, in the true sense of the word, and she does very well to talk about class distinctions! She was his stenographer when Cyrus Sargent married her, and the daughter of a tannery hand. Now, just because she has millions, I am not going to be impressed by anything Ellen Sargent does or says!”

“Mother, I don’t think she meant quality by ‘class,’” Sandy protested. “Everyone knows that Grandfather was General Stanford, and all that! But I think she meant, in a way, the money side of it, the financial division of people into classes!”

“We won’t discuss her,” decided Mrs. Salisbury majestically. “The money standard is one I am not anxious to judge my friends by!”

Still, with the rest of the family, Mrs. Salisbury was relieved when Lizzie, shortly after this, decided of her own accord to accept a better-paid position. “Unless, Mama says, you’d care to raise me to seven a week,” said Lizzie, in parting.

“No, no, I cannot pay that,” Mrs. Salisbury said firmly and Lizzie accordingly left.

Her place was taken by a middle-aged French woman, and whipped cream and the subtle flavor of sherry began to appear in the Salisbury bills of fare. Germaine had no idea whatever of time, and Sandy perforce must set the table whenever there was a company dinner afoot, and lend a hand with the last preparations as well. The kitchen was never really in order in these days, but Germaine cooked deliciously, and Mrs. Salisbury gave eight dinners and a club luncheon during the month of her reign. Then the French woman grew more and more irregular as to hours, and more utterly unreliable as to meals; sometimes the family fared delightfully, sometimes there was almost nothing for dinner. Germaine seemed to fade from sight, not entirely of her own volition, not really discharged; simply she was gone. A Norwegian girl came next, a good-natured, blundering creature whose English was just enough to utterly confuse herself and everyone else. Freda’s mistakes were not half so funny in the making as Alexandra made them in anecdotes afterward; and Freda was given to weird chanting, accompanying herself with a banjo, throughout the evenings. Finally a blonde giant known as “Freda’s cousin” came to see her, and Kane Salisbury, followed by his elated and excited boys, had to eject Freda’s cousin early in the evening, while Freda wept and chattered to the ladies of the house. After that the cousin called often to ask for her,

but Freda had vanished the day after this event, and the Salisburys never heard of her again.

Page 8

They tried another Norwegian, then a Polack, then a Scandinavian. Then they had a German man and wife for a week, a couple who asserted that they would work, without pay, for a good home. This was a most uncomfortable experience, unsuccessful from the first instant. Then came a low-voiced, good-natured South American negress, Marthe, not much of a cook, but willing and strong.

July was mercilessly hot that year, thirty-one burning days of sunshine. Mrs. Salisbury was not a very strong woman, and she had a great many visitors to entertain. She kept Marthe, because the colored woman did not resent constant supervision, and an almost hourly change of plans. Mrs. Salisbury did almost all of the cooking herself, fussing for hours in the hot kitchen over the cold meats and salads and ices that formed the little informal cold suppers to which the Salisburys loved to ask their friends on Saturday and Sunday nights.

Alexandra helped fitfully. She would put her pretty head into the kitchen doorway, perhaps to find her mother icing cake.

“Listen, Mother; I’m going over to Con’s. She’s got that new serve down to a fine point! And I’ve done the boys’ room and the guest room; it’s all ready for the Cutters. And I put towels and soap in the bathroom, only you’ll have to have Marthe wipe up the floor and the tub.”

“You’re a darling child,” the mother would say gratefully.

“Darling nothing!” And Sandy, with her protest, would lay a cool cheek against her mother’s hot one. “Do you have to stay out here, Mother?” she would ask resentfully. “Can’t the Culled Lady do this?”

“Well, I left her to watch it, and it burned,” Mrs. Salisbury would say, “so now it has to be pared and frosted. Such a bother! But this is the very last thing, dear. You run along; I’ll be out of here in two minutes!”

But it was always something more than two minutes. Sometimes even Kane Salisbury was led to protest.

“Can’t we eat less, dear? Or differently? Isn’t there some simple way of managing this week-end supper business? Now, Brewer—Brewer manages it awfully well. He has his man set out a big cold roast or two, cheese, and coffee, and a bowlful of salad, and beer. He’ll get a fruit pie from the club sometimes, or pastries, or a pot of marmalade—”

“Yes, indeed, we must try to simplify,” Mrs. Salisbury would agree brightly. But after such a conversation as this she would go over her accounts very soberly indeed.

“Roasts—cheeses—fruit pies!” she would say bitterly to herself. “Why is it that a man will spend as much on a single lunch for his friends as a woman is supposed to spend

on her table for a whole week, and then ask her what on earth she has done with her money!”

“Kane, I wish you would go over my accounts,” she said one evening, in desperation. “Just suggest where you would cut down!”

Mr. Salisbury ran his eye carelessly over the pages of the little ledger.



Page 9

“Roast beef, two-forty?” he presently read aloud, questioningly.

“Twenty-two cents a pound,” his wife answered simply. But the man’s slight frown deepened.

“Too much—too much!” he said, shaking his head.

Mrs. Salisbury let him read on a moment, turn a page or two. Then she said, in a dead calm:

“Do you think my roasts are too big, Kane?”

“Too big? On the contrary,” her husband answered briskly, “I like a big roast. Sometimes ours are skimpy-looking before they’re even cut!”

“Well!” Mrs. Salisbury said triumphantly.

Her smile apprised her husband that he was trapped, and he put down the account book in natural irritation.

“Well, my dear, it’s your problem!” he said unsympathetically, returning to his newspaper. “I run my business, I expect you to run yours! If we can’t live on our income, we’ll have to move to a cheaper house, that’s all, or take Stanford out of school and put him to work. Dickens says somewhere—and he never said a truer thing!” pursued the man of the house comfortably, “that, if you spend a sixpence less than your income every week, you are rich. If you spend a sixpence more, you never may expect to be anything but poor!”

Mrs. Salisbury did not answer. She took up her embroidery, whose bright colors blurred and swam together through the tears that came to her eyes.

“Never expect to feel anything but poor!” she echoed sadly to herself. “I am sure I never do! Things just seem to run away with me; I can’t seem to get hold of them. I don’t see where it’s going to end!”

“Mother,” said Alexandra, coming in from the kitchen, “Marthe says that all that delicious chicken soup is spoiled. The idiot, she says that you left it in the pantry to cool, and she forgot to put it on the ice! Now, what shall we do, just skip soup, or get some beef extract and season it up?”

“Skip soup,” said Mr. Salisbury cheerfully.

“We can’t very well, dear,” said his wife patiently, “because the dinner is just soup and a fish salad, and one needs the hot start in a perfectly cold supper. No. I’ll go out.”



“Can’t you just tell me what to do?” asked Alexandra impatiently.

But her mother had gone. The girl sat on the arm of the deserted chair, swinging an idle foot.

“I wish I could cook!” she fretted.

“Can’t you, Sandy?” her father asked.

“Oh, some things! Rabbits and fudge and walnut wafers! But I mean that I wish I understood sauces and vegetables and seasoning, and getting things cooked all at the same moment! I don’t mean that I’d like to do it, but I would like to know how. Now, Mother’ll scare up some perfectly delicious soup for dinner, cream of something or other, and I could do it perfectly well, if only I knew how!”

“Suppose I paid you a regular salary, Sandy—” her father was beginning, with the untiring hopefulness of the American father. But the girl interrupted vivaciously:



Page 10

“Dad, darling, that isn’t practical! I’d love it for about two days. Then we’d settle right down to washing dishes, and setting tables, and dusting and sweeping, and wiping up floors—horrors, horrors, horrors!”

She left her perch to take in turn an arm of her father’s chair.

“Well, what’s the solution, pussy?” asked Kane Salisbury, keenly appreciative of the nearness of her youth and beauty.

“It isn’t that,” said Sandy decidedly. “Of course,” she pursued, “the Gregorys get along without a maid, and use a fireless cooker, and drink cereal coffee, but admit, darling, that you’d rather have me useless and frivolous as I am!—than Gertrude or Florence or Winifred Gregory! Why, when Floss was married, Dad, Gertrude played the piano, for music, and for refreshments they had raspberry ice-cream and chocolate layer cake!”

“Well, I like chocolate layer cake,” observed her father mildly. “I thought that was a very pretty wedding; the sisters in their light dresses—”

“Dimity dresses at a wedding!” Alexandra reproached him, round-eyed. “And they are so boisterously proud of the fact that they live on their father’s salary,” she went on, arranging her own father’s hair fastidiously; “it’s positively offensive the way they bounce up to change plates and tell you how to make the neck of mutton appetizing, or the heart of a cow, or whatever it is! And their father pushes the chairs back, Dad, and helps roll up the napkins— I’d die if you ever tried it!”

“But they all work, too, don’t they?”

“Work? Of course they work! And every cent of it goes into the bank. Winnie and Florence are buying gas shares, and Gertrude means to have a year’s study in Europe, if you please!”

“That doesn’t sound very terrible,” said Kane Salisbury, smiling. But some related thought darkened his eyes a moment later. “You wouldn’t have much gas stock if I was taken, Pussy,” said he.

“No, darling, and let that be a lesson to you not to die!” his daughter said blithely. “But I could work, Dad,” she added more seriously, “if Mother didn’t mind so awfully. Not in the kitchen, but somewhere. I’d love to work in a settlement house.”

“Now, there you modern girls are,” her father said. “Can’t bear to clear away the dinner plates in your own houses, yet you’ll cheerfully suggest going to live in the filthiest parts of the city, working, as no servant is ever expected to work, for people you don’t know!”

“I know it’s absurd,” Sandy agreed, smiling. Her answer was ready somewhere in her mind, but she could not quite find it. “But, you see, that’s a new problem,” she presently



offered, “that’s ours to-day, just as managing your house was Mother’s when she married you. Circumstances have changed. I couldn’t ever take up the kitchen question just as it presents itself to Mother. I—people my age don’t believe in a servant class. They just believe in a division of labor, all dignified. If some girl I knew, Grace or Betty, say, came into our kitchen—and that reminds me!” she broke off suddenly.

Page 11

“Of what?”

“Why, of something Owen—Owen Sargent was saying a few days ago. His mother’s quite daffy about establishing social centers and clubs for servant girls, you know, and she’s gotten into this new thing, a sort of college for servants. Now I’ll ask Owen about it. I’ll do that to-morrow. That’s just what I’ll do!”

“Tell me about it,” her father said. But Alexandra shook her head.

“I don’t honestly know anything about it, Dad. But Owen had a lot of papers and a sort of prospectus. His mother was wishing that she could try one of the graduates, but she keeps six or seven house servants, and it wouldn’t be practicable. But I’ll see. I never thought of us! And I’ll bring Owen home to dinner to-morrow. Is that all right, Mother?” she asked, as her mother came back into the room.

“Owen? Certainly, dear; we’re always glad to see him,” Mrs. Salisbury said, a shade too casually, in a tone well calculated neither to alarm nor encourage, balanced to keep events uninterruptedly in their natural course. But Alexandra was too deep in thought to notice a tone.

“You’ll see—this is something entirely new, and just what we need!” she said gaily.

CHAPTER II

The constant visits of Owen Sargent, had he been but a few years older, and had Sandy been a few years older, would have filled Mrs. Salisbury’s heart with a wild maternal hope. As it was, with Sandy barely nineteen, and Owen not quite twenty-two, she felt more tantalizing discomfort in their friendship than satisfaction. Owen was a dear boy, queer, of course, but fine in every way, and Sandy was quite the prettiest girl in River Falls; but it was far too soon to begin to hope that they would do the entirely suitable and acceptable thing of falling in love with each other. “That would be quite too perfect!” thought Mrs. Salisbury, watching them together.

No; Owen was too rich to be overlooked by all sorts of other girls, scrupulous and unscrupulous. Every time he went with his mother for a week to Atlantic City or New York, Mrs. Salisbury writhed in apprehension of the thousand lures that must be spread on all sides about his lumbering feet. He was just the sweet, big, simple sort to be trapped by some little empty-headed girl, some little marplot clever enough to pretend an interest in the prison problem, or the free-milk problem, or some other industrial problem in which Owen had seen fit to interest himself. And her lovely, dignified Sandy, reflected the mother, a match for him in every way, beautiful, good, clever, just the woman to win him, by her own charm and the charms of children and home, away from



the somewhat unnatural interests with which he had surrounded himself, must sit silent and watch him throw himself away.

Sandy, of course, had never had any idea of Owen in this light, of that her mother was quite sure. Sandy treated him as she did her own brothers, frankly, despotically, delightfully. And perhaps it was wiser, after all, not to give the child a hint, for it was evident that the shy, gentle Owen was absolutely at home and happy in the Salisbury home; nothing would be gained by making Sandy feel self-conscious and responsible now.

Page 12

Mrs. Salisbury really did not like Owen Sargent very well, although his money made her honestly think she did. He had a wide, pleasant, but homely face, and an aureole of upstanding yellow hair, and a manner as unaffected as might have been expected from the child of his plain old genial father, and his mother, the daughter of a tanner. He lived alone, with his widowed mother, in a pleasant, old-fashioned house, set in park-like grounds that were the pride of River Falls. His mother often asked waitresses' unions and fresh-air homes to make use of these grounds for picnics, but Mrs. Salisbury knew that the house belonged to Owen, and she liked to dream of a day when Sandy's babies should tumble on those smooth lawns, and Sandy, erect and beautifully furred, should bring her own smart little motor car through that tall iron gateway.

These dreams made her almost effusive in her manner to Owen, and Owen, who was no fool, understood perfectly what she was thinking of him; he understood his own energetic, busy mother; and he understood Sandy's mother, too. He knew that his money made him well worth any mother's attention.

But, like her mother, he believed Sandy too young to have taken any cognizance of it. He thought the girl liked him as she liked anyone else, for his own value, and he sometimes dreamed shyly of her pleasure in suddenly realizing that Mrs. Owen Sargent would be a rich woman, the mistress of a lovely home, the owner of beautiful jewels.

Both, however, were mistaken in Sandy. Her blue, blue eyes, so oddly effective under the silky fall of her straight, mouse-colored hair, were very keen. She knew exactly why her mother suggested that Owen should bring her here or there in the car, "Daddy and the boys and I will go in our old trap, just behind you!" She knew that Owen thought that her quick hand over his, in a game of hearts, the thoughtful stare of her demure eyes, across the dinner table, the help she accepted so casually, climbing into his big car—were all evidences that she was as unconscious of his presence as Stan was. But in reality the future for herself of which Sandy confidently dreamed was one in which, in all innocent complacency, she took her place beside Owen as his wife. Clumsy, wild-haired, bashful he might be at twenty-two, but the farsighted Sandy saw him ten years, twenty years later, well groomed, assured of manner, devotedly happy in his home life. She considered him entirely unable to take care of himself, he needed a good wife. And a good, true, devoted wife Sandy knew she would be, fulfilling to her utmost power all his lonely, little-boy dreams of birthday parties and Christmas revels.

To do her justice, she really and deeply cared for him. Not with passion, for of that as yet she knew nothing, but with a real and absorbing affection. Sandy read "Love in a Valley" and the "Sonnets from the Portuguese" in these days, and thought of Owen. Now and then her well-disciplined little heart surprised her by an unexpected flutter in his direction.

Page 13

She duly brought him home with her to dinner on the evening after her little talk with her parents. Owen was usually to be found browsing about the region where Sandy played marches twice a week for sewing classes in a neighborhood house. They often met, and Sandy sometimes went to have tea with his mother, and sometimes, as to-day, brought him home with her.

Owen had with him the letters, pamphlets and booklet issued by the American School of Domestic Science, and after dinner, while the Salisbury boys wrestled with their lessons, the three others and Owen gathered about the drawing-room table, in the late daylight, and thoroughly investigated the new institution and its claims. Sandy wedged her slender little person in between the two men. Mrs. Salisbury sat near by, reading what was handed to her. The older woman's attitude was one of dispassionate unbelief; she smiled a benign indulgence upon these newfangled ideas. But in her heart she felt the stirring of feminine uneasiness and resentment. It was *her* sacred region, after all, into which these young people were probing so light-heartedly. These were her secrets that they were exploiting; her methods were to be disparaged, tossed aside.

The booklet, with its imposing A.S.D.S. set out fair and plain upon a brown cover, was exhaustive. Its frontispiece was a portrait of one Eliza Slocumb Holley, founder of the school, and on its back cover it bore the vignettted photograph of a very pretty graduate, in apron and cap, with her broom and feather duster. In between these two pictures were pages and pages of information, dozens of pictures. There were delightful long perspectives of model kitchens, of vegetable gardens, orchards, and dairies. There were pictures of girls making jam, and sterilizing bottles, and arranging trays for the sick. There were girls amusing children and making beds. There were glimpses of the model flats, built into the college buildings, with gas stoves and dumb-waiters. And there were the usual pictures of libraries, and playgrounds, and tennis courts.

"Such nice-looking girls!" said Sandy.

"Oh, Mother says that they are splendid girls," Owen said, bashfully eager, "just the kind that go in for trained nursing, you know, or stenography, or bookkeeping."

"They must be a solid comfort, those girls," said Mrs. Salisbury, leaning over to read certain pages with the others. "First year," she read aloud. "Care of kitchen, pantry, and utensils—fire-making—disposal of refuse—table-setting—service—care of furniture—cooking with gas—patent sweepers—sweeping—dusting—care of silver—bread—vegetables—puddings—"

"Help!" said Sandy. "It sounds like the essence of a thousand Mondays! No one could possibly learn all that in one year."

"It's a long term, eleven months," her father said, deeply interested. "That's not all of the first year, either. But it's all practical enough."

Page 14

“What do they do the last year, Mother?”

Mrs. Salisbury adjusted her glasses.

“Third year,” she read obligingly. “All soups, sauces, salads, ices and meats. Infant and invalid diet. Formal dinners, arranged by season. Budgets. Arrangement of work for one maid. Arrangement of work for two maids. Menus, with reference to expense, with reference to nourishment, with reference to attractiveness. Chart of suitable meals for children, from two years up. Table manners for children. Classic stories for children at bedtime. Flowers, their significance upon the table. Picnics—”

“But, no; there’s something beyond that,” Owen said. Mrs. Salisbury turned a page.

“Fourth Year. Post-graduate, not obligatory,” she read. “Unusual German, Italian, Russian and Spanish dishes. Translation of menus. Management of laundries, hotels and institutions. Work of a chef. Work of subordinate cooks. Ordinary poisons. Common dangers of canning. Canning for the market. Professional candy-making—”

“Can you beat it!” said Owen.

“It’s extraordinary!” Mrs. Salisbury conceded. Her husband asked the all-important question:

“What do you have to pay for one of these paragons?”

“It’s all here,” Mrs. Salisbury said. But she was distracted in her search of a scale of prices by the headlines of the various pages. “Rules Governing Employers,” she read, with amusement. “Isn’t this too absurd? ‘Employers of graduates of the A.S.D.S. will kindly respect the conditions upon which, and only upon which, contracts are based.’” She glanced down the long list of items. “A comfortably furnished room,” she read at random, “weekly half holiday-access to nearest public library or family library—opportunity for hot bath at least twice weekly—two hours if possible for church attendance on Sunday—annual two weeks’ holiday, or two holidays of one week each—full payment of salary in advance, on the first day of every month’—what a preposterous idea!” Mrs. Salisbury broke off to say. “How is one to know that she wouldn’t skip off on the second?”

“In that case the school supplies you with another maid for the unfinished term,” explained Sandy, from the booklet.

“Well—” the lady was still a little unsatisfied. “As if they didn’t have privileges enough now!” she said. “It’s the same old story: we are supposed to be pleasing them, not they us!”



“In a family where no other maid is kept,” read Alexandra, “a graduate will take entire charge of kitchen and dining room, go to market if required, do ordinary family washing and ironing, will clean bathroom daily, and will clean and sweep every other room in the house, and the halls, once thoroughly every week. She will be on hand to answer the door only one afternoon every week, besides Sunday—”

“What!” ejaculated Mrs. Salisbury.

“I should like to know who does it on other days!” Alexandra added amazedly.



Page 15

“Don’t you think that’s ridiculous, Kane?” his wife asked eagerly.

“We-el,” the man of the house said temperately, “I don’t know that I do. You see, otherwise the girl has a string tied on her all the time. People in our position, after all, needn’t assume that we’re too good to open our own door—”

“That’s exactly it, sir,” Owen agreed eagerly; “Mother says that that’s one of the things that have upset the whole system for so long! Just the convention that a lady can’t open her own door—”

“But we haven’t found the scale of wages yet—” Mrs. Salisbury interrupted sweetly but firmly. Alexandra, however, resumed the recital of the duties of one maid.

“‘She will not be expected to assume the care of young children,’” she read, “nor to sleep in the room with them. She will not be expected to act as chaperone or escort at night. She—”

“It *doesn’t* say that, Sandy!”

“Oh, yes, it does! And, listen! ‘*Note*. Employers are respectfully requested to maintain as formal an attitude as possible toward the maid. Any intimacy, or exchange of confidences, is especially to be avoided’”—Alexandra broke off to laugh, and her mother laughed with her, but indignantly.

“Insulting!” she said lightly. “Does anyone suppose for an instant that this is a serious experiment?”

“Come, that doesn’t sound very ridiculous to me,” her husband said. “Plenty of women do become confidential with their maids, don’t they?”

“Dear me, how much you do know about women!” Alexandra said, kissing the top of her father’s head. “Aren’t you the bad old man!”

“No; but one might hope that an institution of this kind would put the American servant in her place,” Mrs. Salisbury said seriously, “instead of flattering her and spoiling her beyond all reason. I take my maid’s receipt for salary in advance; I show her the bathroom and the library—that’s the idea, is it? Why, she might be a boarder! Next, they’ll be asking for a place at the table and an hour’s practice on the piano.”

“Well, the original American servant, the ‘neighbor’s girl,’ who came in to help during the haying season, and to put up the preserves, probably did have a place at the table,” Mr. Salisbury submitted mildly.

“Mother thinks that America never will have a real servant class,” Owen added uncertainly; “that is, until domestic service is elevated to the—the dignity of office work,



don't you know? Until it attracts the nicer class of women, don't you know? Mother says that many a good man's fear of old age would be lightened, don't you know?—if he felt that, in case he lost his job, or died, his daughters could go into good homes, and grow up under the eye of good women, don't you know?"

"Very nice, Owen, but not very practical!" Mrs. Salisbury said, with her indulgent, motherly smile. "Oh, dear me, for the good old days of black servants, and plenty of them!" she sighed. For though Mrs. Salisbury had been born some years after the days of plenty known to her mother on her grandfather's plantation, before the war, she was accustomed to detailed recitals of its grandeurs.

Page 16

“Here we are!” said Alexandra, finding a particular page that was boldly headed “Terms.”

“For a cook and general worker, no other help,’ she read, “‘thirty dollars per month—”

“Not so dreadful,” her father said, pleasantly surprised.

“But, listen, Dad! Thirty dollars for a family of two, and an additional two dollars and a half monthly for each other member of the family. That would make ours thirty-seven dollars and a half, wouldn’t it?” she computed swiftly.

“Awful! Impossible!” Mrs. Salisbury said instantly, almost in relief. The discussion made her vaguely uneasy. What did these casual amateurs know about the domestic problem, anyway? Kane, who was always anxious to avoid details; Sandy, all youthful enthusiasm and ignorance, and Owen Sargent, quoting his insufferable mother? For some moments she had been fighting an impulse to soothe them all with generalities. “Never mind; it’s always been a problem, and it always will be! These new schemes are all very well, but don’t trouble your dear heads about it any longer!”

Now she sank back, satisfied. The whole thing was but a mad, Utopian dream. Thirty-seven dollars indeed! “Why, one could get two good servants for that!” thought Mrs. Salisbury, with the same sublime faith with which she had told her husband, in poorer days, years ago, that, if they could but afford her, she knew they could get a “fine girl” for three dollars a week. The fact that the “fine girl” did not apparently exist did not at all shake Mrs. Salisbury’s confidence that she could get two “good girls.” Her hope in the untried solution rose with every failure.

“Thirty-seven is steep,” said Kane Salisbury slowly. “However! What do we pay now, Mother?”

“Five a week,” said that lady inflexibly.

“But we paid Germaine more,” said Alexandra eagerly. “And didn’t you pay Lizzie six and a half?”

“The last two months I did, yes,” her mother agreed unwillingly. “But that comes only to twenty-six or seven,” she added.

“But, look here,” said Owen, reading. “Here it says: *Note*. Where a graduate is required to manage on a budget, it is computed that she saves the average family from two to seven dollars weekly on food and fuel bills.”

“Now that begins to sound like horse sense,” Mr. Salisbury began. But the mistress of the house merely smiled, and shook a dubious head, and the younger members of the family here created a diversion by reminding their sister’s guest, with animation, that he had half-asked them to go out for a short ride in his car. Alexandra accordingly ran for a



veil, and the young quartette departed with much noise, Owen stuffing his pamphlets and booklet into his pocket before he went.

Mr. and Mrs. Salisbury settled down contentedly to double Canfield, the woman crushing out the last flicker of the late topic with a placid shake of the head, when the man asked her for her honest opinion of the American School of Domestic Science. "I don't truly think it's at all practical, dear," said Mrs. Salisbury regretfully. "But we might watch it for a year or two and go into the question again some time, if you like. Especially if some one else has tried one of these maids, and we have had a chance to see how it goes!"



Page 17

The very next morning Mrs. Salisbury awakened with a dull headache. Hot sunlight was streaming into the bedroom, an odor of coffee, drifting upstairs, made her feel suddenly sick. Her first thought was that she *could* not have Sandy's two friends to luncheon, and she *could* not keep a shopping and tea engagement with a friend of her own! She might creep through the day somehow, but no more.

She dressed slowly, fighting dizziness, and went slowly downstairs, sighing at the sight of disordered music and dust in the dining-room, the sticky chafing-dish and piled plates in the pantry. In the kitchen was a litter of milk bottles, saucepans, bread and crumbs and bread knife encroaching upon a basket of spilled berries, egg shells and melting bacon. The blue sides of the coffee-pot were stained where the liquid and grounds had bubbled over it. Marthe was making toast, the long fork jammed into a plate hole of the range. Mrs. Salisbury thought that she had never seen sunlight so mercilessly hot and bright before—

"Rotten coffee!" said Mr. Salisbury cheerfully, when his wife took her place at the table.

"And she *never* uses the poacher!" Alexandra added reproachfully. "And she says that the cream is sour because the man leaves it at half-past four, right there in the sunniest corner of the porch— can't he have a box or something, Mother?"

"Gosh, I wouldn't care what she did if she'd get a move on," said Stanford frankly. "She's probably asleep out there, with her head in the frying pan!"

Mrs. Salisbury went into the kitchen again. She had to pause in the pantry because the bright squares of the linoleum, and the brassy faucets, and the glare of the geraniums outside the window seemed to rush together for a second.

Marthe was on the porch, exchanging a few gay remarks with the garbage man before shutting the side door after him. The big stove was roaring hot, a thick odor of boiling clothes showed that Marthe was ready for her cousin Nancy, the laundress, who came once a week. A saucepan deeply gummed with cereal was soaking beside the hissing and smoking frying pan Mrs. Salisbury moved the frying pan, and the quick heat of the coal fire rushed up at her face—

"Why," she whispered, opening anxious eyes after what seemed a long time, "who fainted?"

A wheeling and rocking mass of light and shadow resolved itself into the dining-room walls, settled and was still. She felt the soft substance of a sofa pillow under her head, the hard lump that was her husband's arm supporting her shoulders.

"That's it—now she's all right!" said Kane Salisbury, his kind, concerned face just above her own. Mrs. Salisbury shifted heavy, languid eyes, and found Sandy.

“Darling, you fell!” the daughter whispered. White-lipped, pitiful, with tears still on her round cheeks, Sandy was fanning her mother with a folded newspaper.



Page 18

"Well, how silly of me!" Mrs. Salisbury said weakly. She sighed, tried too quickly to sit up, and fainted quietly away again.

This time she opened her eyes in her own bed, and was made to drink something sharp and stinging, and directed not to talk. While her husband and daughter were hanging up things, and reducing the tumbled room to order, the doctor arrived.

"Dr. Hollister, I call this an imposition!" protested the invalid smilingly. "I have been doing a little too much, that's all! But don't you dare say the word rest-cure to me again!"

But Doctor Hollister did not smile; there was no smiling in the house that day.

"Mother may have to go away," Alexandra told anxious friends, very sober, but composed. "Mother may have to take a rest-cure," she said a day or two later.

"But you won't let them send me to a hospital again, Kane?" pleaded his wife one evening. "I almost die of lonesomeness, wondering what you and the children are doing! Couldn't I just lie here? Marthe and Sandy can manage somehow, and I promise you I truly won't worry, just lie here like a queen!"

"Well, perhaps we'll give you a trial," smiled Kane Salisbury, very much enjoying an hour of quiet, at his wife's bedside. "But don't count on Marthe. She's going."

"Marthe is?" Mrs. Salisbury only leaned a little more heavily on the strong arm that held her, and laughed comfortably. "I refuse to concern myself with such sordid matters," she said. "But why?"

"Because I've got a new girl, hon."

"You have!" She shifted about to stare at him, aroused by his tone. Light came. "You've not gotten one of those college cooks, have you, Kane?" she demanded. "Oh, Kane! Not at thirty-seven dollars a month! Oh, you have, you wicked, extravagant boy!"

"Cheaper than a trained nurse, petty!"

Mrs. Salisbury was still shaking a scandalized head, but he could see the pleasure and interest in her eyes. She sank back in her pillows, but kept her thin fingers gripped tightly over his.

"How you do spoil me, Tip!" The name took him back across many years to the little eighteen-dollar cottage and the days before Sandy came. He looked at his wife's frail little figure, the ruffled frills that showed under her loose wrapper, at throat and elbows.



There was something girlish still about her hanging dark braid, her big eyes half visible in the summer twilight.

“Well, you may depend upon it, you’re in for a good long course of spoiling now, Miss Sally!” said he.

CHAPTER III



Page 19

Justine Harrison, graduate servant of the American School of Domestic Science, arrived the next day. If Mrs. Salisbury was half consciously cherishing an expectation of some one as crisp and cheerful as a trained nurse might have been, she was disappointed. Justine was simply a nice, honest-looking American country girl, in a cheap, neat, brown suit and a dreadful hat. She smiled appreciatively when Alexandra showed her her attractive little room, unlocked what Sandy saw to be a very orderly trunk, changed her hot suit at once for the gray gingham uniform, and went to Mrs. Salisbury's room with great composure, for instructions. In passing, Alexandra—feeling the situation to be a little odd, yet bravely, showed her the back stairway and the bathroom, and murmured something about books being in the little room off the drawing-room downstairs. Justine smiled brightly.

“Oh, I brought several books with me,” she said, “and I subscribe to two weekly magazines and one monthly. So usually I have enough to read.”

“How do you do? You look very cool and comfortable, Justine. Now, you'll have to find your own way about downstairs. You'll see the coffee next to the bread box, and the brooms are in the laundry closet. Just do the best you can. Mr. Salisbury likes dry toast in the morning—eggs in some way. We get eggs from the milkman; they seem fresher. But you have to tell him the day before. And I understood that you'll do most of the washing? Yes. My old Nancy was here day before yesterday, so there's not much this week.” It was in some such disconnected strain as this that Mrs. Salisbury welcomed and initiated the new maid.

Justine bowed reassuringly.

“I'll find everything, Madam. And do you wish me to manage and to market for awhile until you are about again?”

The invalid sent a pleading glance to Sandy.

“Oh, I think my daughter will do that,” she said.

“Oh, now, why, Mother?” Sandy asked, in affectionate impatience. “I don't begin to know as much about it as Justine probably does. Why not let her?”

“If Madam will simply tell me what sum she usually spends on the table,” said Justine, “I will take the matter in hand.”

Mrs. Salisbury hesitated. This was the very stronghold of her authority. It seemed terrible to her, indelicate, to admit a stranger.

“Well, it varies a little,” she said restlessly. “I am not accustomed to spending a set sum.” She addressed her daughter. “You see, I've been paying Nancy every week, dear,” said she, “and the other laundry. And little things come up—”

“What sum would be customary, in a family this size?” Alexandra asked briskly of the graduate servant.

Justine was business-like.

“Seven dollars for two persons is the smallest sum we are allowed to handle,” she said promptly. “After that each additional person calls for three dollars weekly in our minimum scale. Four or five dollars a week per person, not including the maid, is the usual allowance.”



Page 20

“Mercy! Would that be twenty dollars for table alone?” the mistress asked. “It is never that now, I think. Perhaps twice a week,” she said, turning to Alexandra, “your father gives me five dollars at the breakfast table—”

“But, Mother, you telephone and charge at the market, and Lewis & Sons, too, don’t you?” Sandy asked.

“Well, yes, that’s true. Yes, I suppose it comes to fully twenty-five dollars a week, when you think of it. Yes, it probably comes to more. But it never seems so much, somehow. Well, suppose we say twenty-five—”

“Twenty-five, I’ll tell Dad.” Alexandra confirmed it briskly.

“I used to keep accounts, years ago,” Mrs. Salisbury said plaintively. “Your father—” and again she turned to her daughter, as if to make this revelation of her private affairs less distressing by so excluding the stranger. “Your father has always been the most generous of men,” she said; “he always gives me more money if I need it, and I try to do the best I can.” And a little annoyed, in her weakness and helplessness by this business talk, she lay back on her pillow, and closed her eyes.

“Twenty-five a week, then!” Alexandra said, closing the talk by jumping up from a seat on her mother’s bed, and kissing the invalid’s eyes in parting. Justine, who had remained standing, followed her down to the kitchen, where, with cheering promptitude, the new maid fell upon preparations for dinner. Alexandra rather bashfully suggested what she had vaguely planned for dinner; Justine nodded intelligently at each item; presently Alexandra left her, busily making butter-balls, and went upstairs to report.

“Nothing sensational about her,” said Sandy to her mother, “but she takes hold! She’s got some bleaching preparation of soda or something drying on the sink-board; she took the shelf out of the icebox the instant she opened it, and began to scour it while she talked. She’s got a big blue apron on, and she’s hung a nice clean white one on the pantry door.”

There was nothing sensational about the tray which Justine carried up to the sick room that evening—nothing sensational in the dinner which was served to the diminished family. But the Salisbury family began that night to speak of Justine as the “Treasure.”

“Everything hot and well seasoned and nicely served,” said the man of the house in high satisfaction, “and the woman looks like a servant, and acts like one. Sandy says she’s turning the kitchen upside down, but, I say, give her her head!”

The Treasure, more by accident than design, was indeed given her head in the weeks that followed, for Mrs. Salisbury steadily declined into a real illness, and the worried family was only too glad to delegate all the domestic problems to Justine. The invalid’s



condition, from “nervous breakdown” became “nervous prostration,” and August was made terrible for the loving little group that watched her by the cruel fight with typhoid fever into which



Page 21

Mrs. Salisbury's exhausted little body was drawn. Weak as she was physically, her spirit never failed her; she met the overwhelming charges bravely, rallied, sank, rallied again and lived. Alexandra grew thin, if prettier than ever, and Owen Sargent grew bold and big and protecting to meet her need. The boys were "angels," their sister said, helpful, awed and obedient, but the children's father began to stoop a little and to show gray in the thick black hair at his temples.

Soberly, sympathetically, Justine steered her own craft through all the storm and confusion of the domestic crisis. Trays appeared and disappeared without apparent effort. Hot and delicious meals were ready at the appointed hours, whether the pulse upstairs went up or down. Tradespeople were paid; there was always ice; there was always hot water. The muffled telephone never went unanswered, the doctor never had to ring twice for admittance. If fruit was sent up to the invalid, it was icy cold; if soup was needed, it appeared, smoking hot, and guiltless of even one floating pinpoint of fat.

Alexandra and the trained nurse always found the kitchen the same: orderly, aired, silent, with Justine, a picture of domestic efficiency, sitting by the open window, or on the shady side porch, shelling peas or peeling apples, or perhaps wiping immaculate glasses with an immaculate cloth at the sink. The ticking clock, the shining range, the sunlight lying in clean-cut oblongs upon the bright linoleum, Justine's smoothly braided hair and crisp percales, all helped to form a picture wonderfully restful and reassuring in troubled days.

Alexandra, tired with a long vigil in the sick room, liked to slip down late at night, to find Justine putting the last touches to the day's good work. A clean checked towel would be laid over the rising, snowy mound of dough; the bubbling oatmeal was locked in the fireless cooker, doors were bolted, window shades drawn. There was an admirable precision about every move the girl made.

The two young women liked to chat together, and sometimes, when some important message took her to Justine's door in the evening, Alexandra would linger, pleasantly affected by the trim little apartment, the roses in a glass vase, Justine's book lying open-faced on the bed, or her unfinished letter waiting on the table. For all exterior signs, at these times, she might have been a guest in the house.

Promptly, on every Saturday evening, the Treasure presented her account book to Mr. Salisbury. There was always a small balance, sometimes five dollars, sometimes one, but Justine evidently had well digested Dickens' famous formula for peace of mind.

"You're certainly a wonder, Justine!" said the man of the house more than once. "How do you manage it?"



“Oh, I cut down in dozens of ways,” the girl returned, with her grave smile. “You don’t notice it, but I know. You have kidney stews, and onion soups, and cherry pies, instead of melons and steaks and ice-cream, that’s all!”



Page 22

“And everyone just as well pleased,” he said, in real admiration. “I congratulate you.”

“It’s only what we are all taught at college,” Justine assured him. “I’m just doing what they told me to! It’s my business.”

“It’s pretty big business, and it’s been waiting a long while,” said Kane Salisbury.

When Mrs. Salisbury began to get well, she began to get very hungry. This was plain sailing for Justine, and she put her whole heart into the dainty trays that went upstairs three times a day. While she was enjoying them, Mrs. Salisbury liked to draw out her clever maid, and the older woman and the young one had many a pleasant talk together. Justine told her mistress that she had been country-born and bred, and had grown up with a country girl’s longing for nice surroundings and education of the better sort.

“My name is not Justine at all,” she said smilingly, “nor Harrison, either, although I chose it because I have cousins of that name. We are all given names when we go to college and take them with us. Until the work is recognized, as it must be some day, as dignified and even artistic, we are advised to sink our own identities in this way.”

“You mean that Harrison isn’t your name?” Mrs. Salisbury felt this to be really a little alarming, in some vague way.

“Oh, no! And Justine was given me as a number might have been.”

“But what is your name?” The question fell from Mrs. Salisbury as naturally as an “Ouch!” would have fallen had somebody dropped a lighted match on her hand. “I had no idea of that!” she went on artlessly. “But I suppose you told Mr. Salisbury?”

The luncheon was finished, and now Justine stood up, and picked up the tray.

“No. That’s the very point. We use our college names,” she reiterated simply. “Will you let me bring you up a little more custard, Madam?”

“No, thank you,” Mrs. Salisbury said, after a second’s pause. She looked a little thoughtful as Justine walked away. There is no real reason why one’s maid should not wear an assumed name, of course. Still—

“What a ridiculous thing that college must be!” said Mrs. Salisbury, turning comfortably in her pillows. “But she certainly is a splendid cook!”

About this point, at least, there was no argument. Justine did not need cream or sherry, chopped nuts or mushroom sauces to make simple food delicious. She knew endless ways in which to serve food; potatoes became a nightly surprise, macaroni was never the same, rice had a dozen delightful roles. Because the family enjoyed her maple



custard or almond cake, she did not, as is the habit with cooks, abandon every other flavoring for maple or almond. She was following a broader schedule than that supplied by the personal tastes of the Salisburys, and she went her way serenely.

Not so much as a teaspoonful of cold spinach was wasted in these days. Justine's "left-over" dishes were quite as good as anything else she cooked; her artful combinations, her garnishes of pastry, her illusive seasoning, her enveloping and varied sauces disguised and transformed last night's dinner into a real feast to-night.



Page 23

The Treasure went to market only twice a week, on Saturdays and Tuesdays. She planned her meals long beforehand, with the aid of charts brought from college, and paid cash for everything she bought. She always carried a large market basket on her arm on these trips, and something in her trim, strong figure and clean gray gown, as she started off, appealed to a long-slumbering sense of house-holder's pride in Mr. Salisbury. It seemed good to him that a person who worked so hard for him and for his should be so bright and contented looking, should like her life so well.

Late in September Mrs. Salisbury came downstairs again to a spotless drawing-room and a dining-room gay with flowers. Dinner was a little triumph, and after dinner she was escorted to a deep chair, and called upon to admire new papers and hangings, cleaned rugs and a newly polished floor.

"You are wonderful, wonderful people, every one of you!" said the convalescent, smiling eyes roving about her. "Grass paper, Kane, and such a dear border!" she said. "And everything feeling so clean! And my darling girl writing letters and seeing people all these weeks! And my boys so good! And dear old Daddy carrying the real burden for everyone—what a dreadfully spoiled woman I am! And Justine—come here a minute, Justine—"

The Treasure, who was clearing the dining-room table, came in, and smiled at the pretty group, mother and father, daughter and sons, all rejoicing in being well and together again.

"I don't know how I am ever going to thank you, Justine," said Mrs. Salisbury, with a little emotion. She took the girl's hand in both her transparent white ones. "Do believe that I appreciate it," she said. "It has been a comfort to me, even when I was sickest, even when I apparently didn't know anything, to know that you were here, that everything was running smoothly and comfortably, thanks to you. We could not have managed without you!"

Justine returned the finger pressure warmly, also a little stirred.

"Why, it's been a real pleasure," she said a little huskily. She had to accept a little chorus of thanks from the other members of the family before, blushing very much and smiling, too, she went back to her work.

"She really has managed everything," Kane Salisbury told his wife later. "She handles all the little monthly bills, telephone and gas and so on; seems to take it as a matter of course that she should."

"And what shall I do now, Kane? Go on that way, for a while anyway?" asked his wife.



“Oh, by all means, dear! You must take things easy for a while. By degrees you can take just as much or as little as you want, with the managing.”

“You dear old idiot,” the lady said tenderly, “don’t worry about that! It will all come about quite naturally and pleasantly.”

Indeed, it was still a relief to depend heavily upon Justine. Mrs. Salisbury was quite bewildered by the duties that rose up on every side of her; Sandy’s frocks for the fall, the boys’ school suits, calls that must be made, friends who must be entertained, and the opening festivities of several clubs to which she belonged.



Page 24

She found things running very smoothly downstairs, there seemed to be not even the tiniest flaw for a critical mistress to detect, and the children had added a bewildering number of new names to their lists of favorite dishes. Justine was asked over and over again for her Manila curry, her beef and kidney pie, her scones and German fruit tarts, and for a brown and crisp and savory dish in which the mistress of the house recognized, under the title of chou farci, an ordinary cabbage as a foundation.

“Oh, let’s not have just chickens or beef,” Sandy would plead when a company dinner was under discussion. “Let’s have one of Justine’s fussy dishes. Leave it to Justine!”

For the Treasure obviously enjoyed company dinner parties, and it was fascinating to Sandy to see how methodically, and with what delightful leisure, she prepared for them. Two or three days beforehand her cake-making, silver-polishing, sweeping and cleaning were well under way, and the day of the event itself was no busier than any other day.

Yet it was on one of these occasions that Mrs. Salisbury first had what she felt was good reason to criticize Justine. During a brief absence from home of both boys, their mother planned a rather formal dinner. Four of her closest friends, two couples, were asked, and Owen Sargent was invited by Sandy to make the group an even eight. This was as many as the family table accommodated comfortably, and seemed quite an event. Ordinarily the mistress of the house would have been fussing for some days beforehand, in her anxiety to have everything go well, but now, with Justine’s brain and Justine’s hands in command of the kitchen end of affairs, she went to the other extreme, and did not give her own and Sandy’s share of the preparations a thought until the actual day of the dinner.

For, as was stipulated in her bond, except for a general cleaning once a week, the Treasure did no work downstairs outside of the dining-room and kitchen, and made no beds at any time. This meant that the daughter of the house must spend at least an hour every morning in bed-making, and perhaps another fifteen minutes in that mysteriously absorbing business known as “straightening” the living room. Usually Sandy was very faithful to these duties; more, she whisked through them cheerfully, in her enthusiastic eagerness that the new domestic experiment should prove a success.

But for a morning or two before this particular dinner she had shirked her work. Perhaps the novelty of it was wearing off a little. There was a tennis tournament in progress at the Burning Woods Country Club, two miles away from River Falls, and Sandy, who was rather proud of her membership in this very smart organization, did not want to miss a moment of it. Breakfast was barely over before somebody’s car was at the door to pick up Miss Salisbury, who departed in a whirl of laughter and a flutter of bright veils, to be gone, sometimes, for the entire day.



Page 25

She had gone in just this way on the morning of the dinner, and her mother, who had quite a full program of her own for the morning, had had breakfast in bed. Mrs. Salisbury came downstairs at about ten o'clock to find the dining-room airing after a sweeping; curtains pinned back, small articles covered with a dust cloth, chairs at all angles. She went on to the kitchen, where Justine was beating mayonnaise.

"Don't forget chopped ice for the shaker, the last thing," Mrs. Salisbury said, adding, with a little self-conscious rush, "And, oh, by the way, Justine, I see that Miss Alexandra has gone off again, without touching the living room. Yesterday I straightened it a little bit, but I have two club meetings this morning, and I'm afraid I must fly. If—if she comes in for lunch, will you remind her of it?"

"Will she be back for lunch? I thought she said she would not," Justine said, in honest surprise.

"No; come to think of it, she won't," her mother admitted, a little flatly. "She put her room and her brothers' room in order," she added inconsequently.

Justine did not answer, and Mrs. Salisbury went slowly out of the kitchen, annoyance rising in her heart. It was all very well for Sandy to help out about the house, but this inflexible idea of holding her to it was nonsense!

Ruffled, she went up to her room. Justine had carried away the breakfast tray, but there were towels and bath slippers lying about, a litter of mail on the bed, and Mr. Salisbury's discarded linen strewn here and there. The dressers were in disorder, window curtains were pinned back for more air, and the coverings of the twin beds thrown back and trailing on the floor. Fifteen minutes' brisk work would have straightened the whole, but Mrs. Salisbury could not spare the time just then. The morning was running away with alarming speed; she must be dressed for a meeting at eleven o'clock, and, like most women of her age, she found dressing a slow and troublesome matter; she did not like to be hurried with her brushes and cold creams, her ruffles and veil.

The thought of the unmade beds did not really trouble her when, trim and dainty, she went off in a friend's car to the club at eleven o'clock, but when she came back, nearly two hours later, it was distinctly an annoyance to find her bedroom still untouched. She was tired then, and wanted her lunch; but instead she replaced her street dress with a loose house gown, and went resolutely to work.

Musing over her solitary luncheon, she found the whole thing a little absurd. There was still the drawing-room to be put in order, and no reason in the world why Justine should not do it. The girl was not overworked, and she was being paid thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents every month! Justine was big and strong, she could toss the little extra work off without any effort at all.



She wondered why it is almost a physical impossibility for a nice woman to ask a maid the simplest thing in the world, if she is fairly certain that that maid will be ungracious about it.



Page 26

“Dear me!” thought Mrs. Salisbury, eating her chop and salad, her hot muffin and tart without much heart to appreciate these delicacies, “How much time I have spent in my life, going through imaginary conversations with maids! Why couldn’t I just step to the pantry door and say, in a matter-of-fact tone, ‘I’m afraid I must ask you to put the sitting-room in order, Justine. Miss Sandy has apparently forgotten all about it. I’ll see that it doesn’t occur again.’ And I could add—now that I think of it—‘I will pay you for your extra time, if you like, and if you will remind me at the end of the month.’”

“Well, she may not like it, but she can’t refuse,” was her final summing up. She went out to the kitchen with a deceptive air of composure.

Justine’s occupation, when Mrs. Salisbury found her, strengthened the older woman’s resolutions. The maid, in a silent and spotless kitchen, was writing a letter. Sheets of paper were strewn on the scoured white wood of the kitchen table; the writer, her chin cupped in her hand, was staring dreamily out of the kitchen window. She gave her mistress an absent smile, then laid down her pen and stood up.

“I’m writing here,” she explained, “so that I can catch the milkman for the cream.”

Mrs. Salisbury knew that it was useless to ask if everything was in readiness for the evening’s event. From where she stood she could see piles of plates already neatly ranged in the warming oven, peeled potatoes were soaking in ice water in a yellow bowl, and the parsley that would garnish the big platter was ready, crisp and fresh in a glass of water.

“Well, you look nice and peaceful,” smiled the mistress. “I am just going to dress for a little tea, and I may have to look in at the opening of the Athenaeum Club,” she went on, fussing with a frill at her wrist, “so I may be as late as five. But I’ll bring some flowers when I come. Miss Alexandra will probably be at home by that time, but if she isn’t—if she isn’t, perhaps you would just go in and straighten the living room, Justine? I put things somewhat in order yesterday, and dusted a little, but, of course, things get scattered about, and it needs a little attention. She may of course be back in time to do it—”

Her voice drifted away into casual silence. She looked at Justine expectantly, confidently. The maid flushed uncomfortably.

“I’m sorry,” she said frankly. “But that’s against one of our rules, you know. I am not supposed to—”

“Not ordinarily, I understand that,” Mrs. Salisbury agreed quickly. “But in an emergency —”



Again she hesitated. And Justine, with the maddening gentleness of the person prepared to carry a point at all costs, answered again:

“It’s the rule. I’m sorry; but I am not supposed to.”

“I should suppose that you were in my house to make yourself useful to me,” Mrs. Salisbury said coldly. She used a tone of quiet dignity; but she knew that she had had the worst of the encounter. She was really a little dazed by the firmness of the rebuff.

Page 27

“They make a point of our keeping to the letter of the law,” Justine explained.

“Not knowing what my particular needs are, nor how I like my house to be run, is that it?” the other woman asked shrewdly.

“Well—” Justine hung upon an embarrassed assent. “But perhaps they won’t be so firm about it as soon as the school is really established,” she added eagerly.

“No; I think they will not!” Mrs. Salisbury agreed with a short laugh, “inasmuch as they *cannot*, if they ever hope to get any foothold at all!”

And she left the kitchen, feeling that in the last remark at least she had scored, yet very angry at Justine, who made this sort of warfare necessary.

“If this sort of thing keeps up, I shall simply have to let her *go!*” she said.

But she was trembling, and she came to a full stop in the front hall. It was maddening; it was unbelievable; but that neglected half hour of work threatened to wreck her entire day. With every fiber of her being in revolt, she went into the sitting-room.

This was Alexandra’s responsibility, after all, she said to herself. And, after a moment’s indecision, she decided to telephone her daughter at the Burning Woods Club.

“Hello, Mother,” said Alexandra, when a page had duly informed her that she was wanted at the telephone. Her voice sounded a little tired, faintly impatient. “What is it, Mother?”

“Why, I ought to go to Mary Bell’s tea, dearie, and I wanted just to look in at the Athenaeum—” Mrs. Salisbury began, a little inconsequently. “How soon do you expect to be home?” she broke off to ask.

“I don’t know,” said Sandy lifelessly.

“Are you coming back with Owen?”

“No,” Sandy said, in the same tone. “I’ll come back with the Prichards, I guess, or with one of the girls. Owen and the Brice boy are taking Miss Satterlee for a little spin up around Feather Rock.”

“Miss *who?*” But Mrs. Salisbury knew very well who Miss Satterlee was. A pretty and pert and rowdyish little dancer, she had managed to captivate one or two of the prominent matrons of the club, and was much in evidence there, to the great discomfort of the more conservative Sandy and her intimates.



Now Sandy's mother ended the conversation with a few very casual remarks, in not too sympathetic or indignant a vein. Then, with heart and mind in anything but a hospitable or joyous state, she set about the task of putting the sitting room in order. She abandoned once and for all any hope of getting to her club or her tea that afternoon, and was therefore possessed of three distinct causes of grievance.

With her mother heart aching for the quiet misery betrayed by Sandy's voice, she could not blame the girl. Nor could she blame herself. So Justine got the full measure of her disapproval, and, while she worked, Mrs. Salisbury refreshed her soul with imaginary conversations in which she kindly but firmly informed Justine that her services were no longer needed—



Page 28

However, the dinner was perfect. Course smoothly followed course; there was no hesitating, no hitch; the service was swift, noiseless, unobtrusive. The head of the house was obviously delighted, and the guests enthusiastic.

Best of all, Owen arrived early, irreproachably dressed, if a little uncomfortable in his evening clothes, and confided to Sandy that he had had a “rotten time” with Miss Satterlee.

“But she’s just the sort of little cat that catches a dear, great big idiot like Owen,” said Sandy to her mother, when the older woman had come in to watch the younger slip into her gown for the evening’s affair.

“Look out, dear, or I will begin to suspect you of a tendresse in that direction!” the mother said archly.

“For Owen?” Sandy raised surprised brows. “I’m mad about him, I’d marry him to-night!” she went on calmly.

“If you really cared, dear, you couldn’t use that tone,” her mother said uncomfortably. “Love comes only once, *real* love, that is—”

“Oh, Mother! There’s no such thing as real love,” Sandy said impatiently. “I know ten good, nice men I would marry, and I’ll bet you did, too, years ago, only you weren’t brought up to admit it! But I like Owen best, and it makes me sick to see a person like Rose Satterlee annexing him. She’ll make him utterly wretched; she’s that sort. Whereas I am really decent, don’t you know; I’d be the sort of wife he’d go crazier and crazier about. He’s one of those unfortunate men who really don’t know what they want until they get something they don’t want. They—”

“Don’t, dear. It distresses me to hear you talk this way,” Mrs. Salisbury said, with dignity. “I don’t know whether modern girls realize how dreadful they are,” she went on, “but at least I needn’t have my own daughter show such a lack of—of delicacy and of refinement.” And in the dead silence that followed she cast about for some effective way of changing the subject, and finally decided to tell Sandy what she thought of Justine.

But here, too, Sandy was unsympathetic. Scowling as she hooked the filmy pink and silver of her evening gown, Sandy took up Justine’s defense.

“All up to me, Mother, every bit of it! And, honestly now, you had no right to ask her to do—”

“No right!” Exasperated beyond all words, Mrs. Salisbury picked up her fan, gathered her dragging skirts together, and made a dignified departure from the room. “No right!” she echoed, more in pity than anger. “Well, really, I wonder sometimes what we are



coming to! No right to ask my servant, whom I pay thirty-seven and a half dollars a month, to stop writing letters long enough to clean my sitting room! Well, right or wrong, we'll see!"

But the cryptic threat contained in the last words was never carried out. The dinner was perfect, and Owen was back in his old position as something between a brother and a lover, full of admiring great laughs for Sandy and boyish confidences. There was not a cloud on the evening for Mrs. Salisbury. And the question of Justine's conduct was laid on the shelf.



Page 29

CHAPTER IV

After the dinner party domestic matters seemed to run even more smoothly than before, but there was a difference, far below the surface, in Mrs. Salisbury's attitude toward the new maid. The mistress found herself incessantly looking for flaws in Justine's perfectness; for things that Justine might easily have done, but would not do.

In this Mrs. Salisbury was unconsciously aided and abetted by her sister, Mrs. Otis, a large, magnificent woman of forty-five, who had a masterful and assured manner, as became a very rich and influential widow. Mrs. Otis had domineered Mrs. Salisbury throughout their childhood; she had brought up a number of sons and daughters in a highly successful manner, and finally she kept a houseful of servants, whom she managed with a firm hand, and managed, it must be admitted, very well. She had seen the Treasure many times before, but it was while spending a day in November with her sister that she first expressed her disapproval of Justine.

"You spoil her, Sarah," said Mrs. Otis. "She's a splendid cook, of course, and a nice-mannered girl. But you spoil her."

"I? I have nothing to do with it," Mrs. Salisbury asserted promptly. "She does exactly what the college permits; no more and no less."

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Otis said largely, genially. And she exchanged an amused look with Sandy.

The three ladies were in the little library, after luncheon, enjoying a coal fire. The sisters, both with sewing, were in big armchairs. Sandy, idly turning the pages of a new magazine, sat at her mother's feet. The first heavy rain of the season battered at the windows.

"Now, that darning, Sally," Mrs. Otis said, glancing at her sister's sewing. "Why don't you simply call the girl and ask her to do it? There's no earthly reason why she shouldn't be useful. She's got absolutely nothing to do. The girl would probably be happier with some work in her hands. Don't encourage her to think that she can whisk through her lunch dishes and then rush off somewhere. They have no conscience about it, my dear. You're the mistress, and you are supposed to arrange things exactly to suit yourself, no matter if nobody else has ever done things your way from the beginning of time!"

"That's a lovely theory, Auntie," said Alexandra, "but this is an entirely different situation."

For answer Mrs. Otis merely compressed her lips, and flung the pink yarn that she was knitting into a baby's sacque steadily over her flashing needles.



“Where’s Justine now?” she asked, after a moment.

“In her room,” Mrs. Salisbury answered.

“No; she’s gone for a walk, Mother,” Sandy said. “She loves to walk in the rain, and she wanted to change her library book, and send a telegram or something—”

“Just like a guest in the house!” Mrs. Otis observed, with fine scorn. “Surely she asked you if she might go, Sally?”



Page 30

“No. Her—her work is done. She—comes and goes that way.”

“Without saying a word? And who answers the door?” Mrs. Otis was unaffectedly astonished now.

“She does if she’s in the house, Mattie, just as she answers the telephone. But she’s only actually on duty one afternoon a week.”

“You see, the theory is, Auntie,” Sandy supplied, “that persons on our income—I won’t say of our position, for Mother hates that—but on our income, aren’t supposed to require formal door-answering very often.”

Mrs. Otis, her knitting suspended, moved her round eyes from mother to daughter and back again. She did not say a word, but words were not needed.

“I know it seems outrageous, in some ways, Mattie,” Mrs. Salisbury presently said, with a little nervous laugh. “But what is one to do?”

“Do?” echoed her sister roundly. “Do? Well, I know I keep six house servants, and have always kept at least three, and I never heard the equal of *this* in all my days! Do?—I’d show you what I’d do fast enough! Do you suppose I’d pay a maid thirty-seven dollars a month to go tramping off to the library in the rain, and to tell me what my social status was? Why, Evelyn keeps two, and pays one eighteen and one fifteen, and do you suppose she’d allow either such liberties? Not at all. The downstairs girl wears a nice little cap and apron—‘Madam, dinner is served,’ she says—”

“Yes, but Evelyn’s had seven cooks since she was married,” Sandy, who was not a great admirer of her young married cousin, put in here, “and Arthur said that she actually cried because she could not give a decent dinner!”

“Evelyn’s only a beginner, dear,” said Evelyn’s mother sharply, “but she has the right spirit. No nonsense, regular holidays, and hard work when they are working is the only way to impress maids. Mary Underwood,” she went on, turning to her sister, “says that, when she and Fred are to be away for a meal, she deliberately lays out extra work for the maid; she says it keeps her from getting ideas. No, Sally,” Mrs. Otis concluded, with the older-sister manner she had worn years ago, “no, dear; you are all wrong about this, and sooner or later this girl will simply walk over you, and you’ll see it as I do. Changing her book at the library, indeed! How did she know that you mightn’t want tea served this afternoon?”

“She wouldn’t serve it, if we did, Aunt Martha,” Sandy said, dimpling. “She never serves tea! That’s one of the regulations.”



“Well, we simply won’t discuss it,” Mrs. Otis said, firm lines forming themselves at the corners of her capable mouth. “If you like that sort of thing, you like it, that’s all! I don’t. We’ll talk of something else.”

But she could not talk of anything else. Presently she burst out afresh.

“Dear me, when I think of the way Ma used to manage ’em! No nonsense there; it was walk a chalk line in Ma’s house! Your grandmother,” she said to Alexandra, with stern relish, “had had a pack of slaves about her in *her* young days. But, of course, Sally,” she added charitably, “you’ve been ill, and things do have to run themselves when one’s ill—”



Page 31

"You don't get the idea, Auntie," Sandy said blithely. "Mother pays for efficiency. Justine isn't a mere extra pair of hands; she's a trained professional worker. She's just like a stenographer, except that what she does is ten times harder to learn than stenography. We can no more ask her to get tea than Dad could ask his head bookkeeper to—well, to drop in here some Sunday and O.K. Mother's household accounts. It's an age of specialization, Aunt Martha."

"It's an age of utter nonsense," Mrs. Otis said forcibly. "But if your mother and father like to waste their money that way—"

"There isn't much waste of money to it," Mrs. Salisbury put in neatly, "for Justine manages on less than I ever did. I think there's been only one week this fall when she hasn't had a balance."

"A balance of what?"

"A surplus, I mean. A margin left from her allowance."

The pink wool fell heavily into Mrs. Otis's broad lap. "She handles your money for you, does she, Sally?"

"Why, yes. She seems eminently fitted for it. And she does it for a third less, Mattie, truly. She more than saves the difference in her wages."

"You let her buy things and pay tradesmen, do you?"

"Oh, Auntie, why not?" Alexandra asked, amused but impatient. "Why shouldn't Mother let her do that?"

"Well, it's not my idea of good housekeeping, that's all," Mrs. Otis said staidly. "Managing is the most important part of housekeeping. In giving such a girl financial responsibilities, you not only let go of the control of your household, but you put temptation in her way. No; let the girl try making some beds, and serving tea, now and then; and do your own marketing and paying, Sally. It's the only way."

"Justine tempted—why, she's not that sort of girl at all!" Alexandra laughed gaily.

"Very well, my dear, perhaps she's not, and perhaps you young girls know everything that is to be known about life," her aunt answered witheringly. "But when grown business men were cheated as easily as those men in the First National were," she finished impressively, alluding to recent occurrences in River Falls, "it seems a little astonishing to find a girl your age so sure of her own judgment, that's all."

Sandy's answer, if indirect, was effective.



“How about some tea?” she asked. “Will you have some, either of you? It only takes me a minute to get it.”

“And I wish you could have seen Mattie’s expression, Kane,” Mrs. Salisbury said to her husband when telling him of the conversation that evening, “really, she glared! I suppose she really can’t understand how, with an expensive servant in the house—” Mrs. Salisbury’s voice dropped a little on a note of mild amusement. She sat idly at her dressing table, her hair loosened, her eyes thoughtful. When she spoke again, it was with a shade of resentment. “And, really, it is most inconvenient,” she said. “I



Page 32

don't want to impose upon a girl; I never *did* impose upon a girl; but I like to feel that I'm mistress in my own house. If the work is too hard one day, I will make it easier the next, and so on. But, as Mat says, it *looks* so disobliging in a maid to have her race off; *she* doesn't care whether you get any tea or not; *she's* enjoying herself! And after all one's kindness—And then another thing," she presently roused herself to add, "Mat thinks that it is very bad management on my part to let Justine handle money. She says—"

"I devoutly wish that Mattie Otis would mind—" Mr. Salisbury did not finish his sentence. He wound his watch, laid it on his bureau, and went on, more mildly: "If you can do better than Justine, it may or may not be worth your while to take that out of her hands; but, if you can't, it seems to me sheer folly. My Lord, Sally—"

"Yes, I know! I know," Mrs. Salisbury said hastily. "But, really, Kane," she went on slowly, the color coming into her face, "let us suppose that every family had a graduate cook, who marketed and managed. And let us suppose the children, like ours, out of the nursery. Then just what share of her own household responsibility *is* a woman supposed to take?"

"You are eternally saying, not about me, but about other men's wives, that women to-day have too much leisure as it is. But, with a Justine, why, I could go off to clubs and card parties every day! I'd know that the house was clean, the meals as good and as nourishing as could be; I'd know that guests would be well cared for and that bills would be paid. Isn't a woman, the mistress of a house, supposed to do more than that? I don't want to be a mere figurehead."

Frowning at her own reflection in the glass, deeply in earnest, she tried to puzzle it out.

"In the old times, when women had big estates to look after," she presently pursued, "servants, horses, cows, vegetables and fruit gardens, soap-making and weaving and chickens and babies, they had real responsibilities, they had real interests. Housekeeping to-day isn't interesting. It's confining, and it's monotonous. But take it away, and what is a woman going to do?"

"That," her husband answered seriously, "is the real problem of the day, I truly believe. That is what you women have to discover. Delegating your housekeeping, how are you going to use your energies, and find the work you want to do in the world? How are you going to manage the questions of being obliged to work at home, and to suit your hours to yourself, and to really express yourselves, and at the same time get done some of the work of the world that is waiting for women to do."

His wife continued to eye him expectantly.



“Well, how?” said she.

“I don’t know. I’m asking you!” he answered pointedly. Mrs. Salisbury sighed.

“Dear me, I do get so tired of this talk of efficiency, and women’s work in the world!” she said. “I wish one might feel it was enough to live along quietly, busy with dressmaking, or perhaps now and then making a fancy dessert for guests, giving little teas and card parties, and making calls. It—” a yearning admiration rang in her voice, “it seems such a dignified, pleasant ideal to live up to!” she said.



Page 33

“Well, it looks as if we had seen the last of that particular type of woman,” her husband said cheerfully. “Or at least it looks as if that woman would find her own level, deliberately separate herself from her more ambitious sisters, who want to develop higher arts than that of mere housekeeping.”

“And how do *you* happen to know so much about it, Kane?”

“I? Oh, it’s in the air, I guess,” the man admitted. “The whole idea is changing. A man used to be ashamed of the idea of his wife working. Now men tell you with pride that their wives paint or write or bind books—Bates’ wife makes loads of money designing toys, and Mrs. Brewster is consulting physician on a hospital staff. Mary Shotwell—she was a trained nurse—what was it she did?”

“She gave a series of talks on hygiene for rich people’s children,” his wife supplied. “And of course Florence Yeats makes candy, and the Gerrish girls have opened a tea room in the old garage. But it seems funny, just the same! It seems funny to me that so many women find it worth while to hire servants, so that they can rush off to make the money to pay the servants! It would seem so much more normal to stay at home and do the housework themselves, and it would *look* better.”

“Well, certain women always will, I suppose. And others will find their outlets in other ways, and begin to look about for Justines, who will lift the household load. I believe we’ll see the time, Sally,” said Kane Salisbury thoughtfully, “when a young couple, launching into matrimony, will discuss expenses with a mutual interest; you pay this and I’ll pay that, as it were. A trained woman will step into their kitchen, and Madame will walk off to business with her husband, as a matter of course.”

“Heaven forbid!” Mrs. Salisbury said piously. “If there is anything romantic or tender or beautiful about married life under those circumstances, I fail to see it, that’s all!”

It happened, a week or two later, on a sharp, sunshiny morning in early winter, that Mrs. Salisbury and Alexandra found themselves sauntering through the nicest shopping district of River Falls. There were various small things to be bought for the wardrobes of mother and daughter, prizes for a card party, birthday presents for one of the boys, and a number of other little things.

They happened to pass the windows of Lewis & Sons’ big grocery, one of the finest shops in town, on their way from one store to another, and, attracted by a window full of English preserves, Mrs. Salisbury decided to go in and leave an order.

“I hope that you are going to bring your account back to us, Mrs. Salisbury,” said the alert salesman who waited upon them. “We are always sorry to let an old customer go.”

“But I have an account here,” said Mrs. Salisbury, startled.

The salesman, smiling, shook his head, and one of the members of the firm, coming up, confirmed the denial.



Page 34

"We were very sorry to take your name off our books, Mrs. Salisbury," said he, with pleasant dignity; "I can remember your coming into the old store on River Street when this young lady here was only a small girl."

His hand indicated a spot about three feet from the floor, as the height of the child Alexandra, and the grown Alexandra dimpled an appreciation of his memory.

"But I don't understand," Mrs. Salisbury said, wrinkling her forehead; "I had no idea that the account was closed, Mr. Lewis. How long ago was this?"

"It was while you were ill," said Mr. Lewis soothingly. "You might look up the exact date, Mr. Laird."

"But why?" Mrs. Salisbury asked, prettily puzzled.

"That I don't know," answered Mr. Lewis. "And at the time, of course, we did not press it. There was no complaint, of that I'm very sure."

"But I don't understand," Mrs. Salisbury persisted. "I don't see who could have done it except Mr. Salisbury, and, if he had had any reason, he would have told me of it. However," she rose to go, "if you'll send the jams, and the curry, and the chocolate, Mr. Laird, I'll look into the matter at once."

"And you're quite yourself again?" Mr. Lewis asked solicitously, accompanying them to the door. "That's the main thing, isn't it? There's been so much sickness everywhere lately. And your young lady looks as if she didn't know the meaning of the word. Wonderful morning, isn't it? Good morning, Mrs. Salisbury!"

"Good morning!" Mrs. Salisbury responded graciously. But, as soon as she and Alexandra were out of hearing, her face darkened. "That makes me *wild!*" said she.

"What does, darling?"

"That! Justine having the audacity to change my trade!"

"But why should she want to, Mother?"

"I really don't know. Given it to friends of hers perhaps."

"Oh, Mother, she wouldn't!"

"Well, we'll see." Mrs. Salisbury dropped the subject, and brought her mind back with a visible effort to the morning's work.



Immediately after lunch she interrogated Justine. The girl was drying glasses, each one emerging like a bubble of hot and shining crystal from her checked glass towel.

“Justine,” began the mistress, “have we been getting our groceries from Lewis & Sons lately?”

Justine placidly referred to an account book which she took from a drawer under the pantry shelves.

“Our last order was August eleventh,” she announced.

Something in her unembarrassed serenity annoyed Mrs. Salisbury.

“May I ask why?” she suggested sharply.

“Well, they are a long way from here,” Justine said, after a second’s thought, “and they are very expensive grocers, Mrs. Salisbury. Of course, what they have is of the best, but they cater to the very richest families, you know—firms like Lewis & Sons aren’t very much interested in the orders they receive from—well, from upper middle-class homes, people of moderate means. They handle hotels and the summer colony at Burning Woods.”



Page 35

Justine paused, a little uncertain of her terms, and Mrs. Salisbury interposed an icy question.

“May I ask where you *have* transferred my trade?”

“Not to any one place,” the girl answered readily and mildly. But a little resentful color had crept into her cheeks. “I pay as I go, and follow the bargains,” she explained. “I go to market twice a week, and send enough home to make it worth while for the tradesman. You couldn’t market as I do, Mrs. Salisbury, but the tradespeople rather expect it of a maid. Sometimes I gather an assortment of vegetables into my basket, and get them to make a price on the whole. Or, if there is a sale at any store, I go there, and order a dozen cans, or twenty pounds of whatever they are selling.”

Mrs. Salisbury was not enjoying this revelation. The obnoxious term “upper middle class” was biting like an acid upon her pride. And it was further humiliating to contemplate her maid as a driver of bargains, as dickering for baskets of vegetables.

“The best is always the cheapest in the long run, whatever it may cost, Justine,” she said, with dignity. “We may not be among the richest families in town,” she was unable to refrain from adding, “but it is rather amusing to hear you speak of the family as upper middle class!”

“I only meant the—the sort of ordering we did,” Justine hastily interposed. “I meant from the grocer’s point of view.”

“Well, Mr. Lewis sold groceries to my grandmother before I was married,” Mrs. Salisbury said loftily, “and I prefer him to any other grocer. If he is too far away, the order may be telephoned. Or give me your list, and I will stop in, as I used to do. Then I can order any little extra delicacy that I see, something I might not otherwise think of. Let me know what you need to-morrow morning, and I’ll see to it.”

To her surprise, Justine did not bow an instant assent. Instead the girl looked a little troubled.

“Shall I give you my accounts and my ledger?” she asked rather uncertainly.

“No-o, I don’t see any necessity for that,” the older woman said, after a second’s pause.

“But Lewis & Sons is a very expensive place,” Justine pursued; “they never have sales, never special prices. Their cheapest tomatoes are fifteen cents a can, and their peaches twenty-five—”

“Never mind,” Mrs. Salisbury interrupted her briskly. “We’ll manage somehow. I always did trade there, and never had any trouble. Begin with him to-morrow. And, while, of



course, I understand that I was ill and couldn't be bothered in this case, I want to ask you not to make any more changes without consulting me, if you please."

Justine, still standing, her troubled eyes on her employer, the last glass, polished to diamond brightness, in her hand, frowned mutinously.

"You understand that if you do any ordering whatever, Mrs. Salisbury, I will have to give up my budget. You see, in that case, I wouldn't know where I stood at all."

Page 36

“You would get the bill at the end of the month,” Mrs. Salisbury said, displeased.

“Yes, but I don’t run bills,” the girl persisted.

“I don’t care to discuss it, Justine,” the mistress said pleasantly; “just do as I ask you, if you please, and we’ll settle everything at the end of the month. You shall not be held responsible, I assure you.”

She went out of the kitchen, and the next morning had a pleasant half hour in the big grocery, and left a large order.

“Just a little kitchen misunderstanding,” she told the affable Mr. Lewis, “but when one is ill—However, I am rapidly getting the reins back into my own hands now.”

After that, Mrs. Salisbury ordered in person, or by telephone, every day, and Justine’s responsibilities were confined to the meat market and greengrocer. Everything went along very smoothly until the end of the month, when Justine submitted her usual weekly account and a bill from Lewis & Sons which was some three times larger in amount than was the margin of money supposed to pay it.

This was annoying. Mrs. Salisbury could not very well rebuke her, nor could she pay the bill out of her own purse. She determined to put it aside until her husband seemed in a mood for financial advances, and, wrapping it firmly about the inadequate notes and silver given her by Justine, she shut it in a desk drawer. There the bill remained, although the money was taken out for one thing or another; change that must be made, a small bill that must be paid at the door.

Another fortnight went by, and Lewis & Sons submitted another bimonthly bill. Justine also gave her mistress another inadequate sum, what was left from her week’s expenditures.

The two grocery bills were for rather a formidable sum. The thought of them, in their desk drawer, rather worried Mrs. Salisbury. One evening she bravely told her husband about them, and laid them before him.

Mr. Salisbury was annoyed. He had been free from these petty worries for some months, and he disliked their introduction again.

“I thought this was Justine’s business, Sally?” said he, frowning over his eyeglasses.

“Well, it *is*” said his wife, “but she hasn’t enough money, apparently, and she simply handed me these, without saying anything.”

“Well, but that doesn’t sound like her. Why?”



“Oh, because I do the ordering, she says. They’re queer, you know, Kane; all servants are. And she seems very touchy about it.”

“Nonsense!” said the head of the house roundly. “Oh, Justine!” he shouted, and the maid, after putting an inquiring head in from the dining-room, duly came in, and stood before him.

“What’s struck your budget that you were so proud of, Justine?” asked Kane Salisbury. “It looks pretty sick.”

“I am not keeping on a budget now,” answered Justine, with a rather surprised glance at her mistress.



Page 37

“Not; but why not?” asked the man good-naturedly. And his wife added briskly, “Why did you stop, Justine?”

“Because Mrs. Salisbury has been ordering all this month,” Justine said. “And that, of course, makes it impossible for me to keep track of what is spent. These last four weeks I have only been keeping an account; I haven’t attempted to keep within any limit.”

“Ah, you see that’s it,” Kane Salisbury said triumphantly. “Of course that’s it! Well, Mrs. Salisbury will have to let you go back to the ordering then. D’ye see, Sally? Naturally, Justine can’t do a thing while you’re buying at random—”

“My dear, we have dealt with Lewis & Sons ever since we were married,” Mrs. Salisbury said, smiling with great tolerance, and in a soothing voice, “Justine, for some reason, doesn’t like Lewis & Sons—”

“It isn’t that,” said the maid quickly. “It’s just that it’s against the rules of the college for anyone else to do any ordering, unless, of course, you and I discussed it beforehand and decided just what to spend.”

“You mean, unless I simply went to market for you?” asked the mistress, in a level tone.

“Well, it amounts to that—yes.”

Mrs. Salisbury threw her husband one glance.

“Well, I’ll tell you what we have decided in the morning, Justine,” she said, with dignity. “That’s all. You needn’t wait.”

Justine went back to her kitchen, and Mr. Salisbury, smiling, said:

“Sally, how unreasonable you are! And how you do dislike that girl!”

The outrageous injustice of this scattered to the winds Mrs. Salisbury’s last vestige of calm, and, after one scathing summary of the case, she refused to discuss it at all, and opened the evening paper with marked deliberation.

For the next two or three weeks she did all the marketing herself, but this plan did not work well. Bills doubled in size, and so many things were forgotten, or were ordered at the last instant by telephone, and arrived too late, that the whole domestic system was demoralized.

Presently, of her own accord, Mrs. Salisbury reestablished Justine with her allowance, and with full authority to shop when and how she pleased, and peace fell again. But, smoldering in Mrs. Salisbury’s bosom was a deep resentment at this peculiar and



annoying state of affairs. She began to resent everything Justine did and said, as one human being shut up in the same house with another is very apt to do.

No schooling ever made it easy to accept the sight of Justine's leisure when she herself was busy. It was always exasperating, when perhaps making beds upstairs, to glance from the window and see Justine starting for market, her handsome figure well displayed in her long dark coat, her shining braids half hidden by her simple yet dashing hat.

"I walked home past Perry's," Justine would perhaps say on her return, "to see their prize chrysanthemums. They really are wonderful! The old man took me over the greenhouses himself, and showed me everything!"



Page 38

Or perhaps, unpacking her market basket by the spotless kitchen table, she would confide innocently:

“Samuels is really having an extraordinary sale of serges this morning. I went in, and got two dress lengths for my sister’s children. If I can find a good dressmaker, I really believe I’ll have one myself. I think”—Justine would eye her vegetables thoughtfully—“I think I’ll go up now and have my bath, and cook these later.”

Mrs. Salisbury could reasonably find no fault with this. But an indescribable irritation possessed her whenever such a conversation took place. The coolness!—she would say to herself, as she went upstairs—wandering about to shops and greenhouses, and quietly deciding to take a bath before luncheon! Why, Mrs. Salisbury had had maids who never once asked for the use of the bathroom, although they had been for months in her employ.

No, she could not attack Justine on this score. But she began to entertain the girl with enthusiastic accounts of the domestics of earlier and better days.

“My mother had a girl,” she said, “a girl named Norah O’Connor. I remember her very well. She swept, she cleaned, she did the entire washing for a family of eight, and she did all the cooking. And such cookies, and pies, and gingerbread as she made! All for sixteen dollars a month. We regarded Norah as a member of the family, and, even on her holidays she would take three or four of us, and walk with us to my father’s grave; that was all she wanted to do. You don’t see her like in these days, dear old Norah!”

Justine listened respectfully, silently. Once, when her mistress was enlarging upon the advantages of slavery, the girl commented mildly:

“Doesn’t it seem a pity that the women of the United States didn’t attempt at least to train all those Southern colored people for house servants? It seems to be their natural element. They love to live in white families, and they have no caste pride. It would seem to be such a waste of good material, letting them worry along without much guidance all these years. It almost seems as if the Union owed it to them.”

“Dear me, I wish somebody would! I, for one, would love to have dear old mammies around me again,” Mrs. Salisbury said, with fervor. “They know their place,” she added neatly.

“The men could be butlers and gardeners and coachmen,” pursued Justine.

“Yes, and with a lot of finely trained colored women in the market, where would you girls from the college be?” the other woman asked, not without a spice of mischievous enjoyment.



“We would be a finer type of servant, for more fastidious people,” Justine scored by answering soberly. “You could hardly expect a colored girl to take the responsibility of much actual managing, I should suppose. There would always be a certain proportion of people who would prefer white servants.”



Page 39

"Perhaps there are," Mrs. Salisbury admitted dubiously. She felt, with a sense of triumph, that she had given Justine a pretty strong hint against "uppishness." But Justine was innocently impervious to hints. As a matter of fact, she was not an exceptionally bright girl; literal, simple, and from very plain stock, she was merely well trained in her chosen profession. Sometimes she told her mistress of her fellow-graduates, taking it for granted that Mrs. Salisbury entirely approved of all the ways of the American School of Domestic Science.

"There's Mabel Frost," said Justine one day. "She would have graduated when I did, but she took the fourth year's work. She really is of a very fine family; her father is a doctor. And she has a position with a doctor's family now, right near here, in New Troy. There are just two in family, and both are doctors, and away all day. So Mabel has a splendid chance to keep up her music."

"Music?" Mrs. Salisbury asked sharply.

"Piano. She's had lessons all her life. She plays very well, too."

"Yes; and some day the doctor or his wife will come in and find her at the piano, and your friend will lose her fine position," Mrs. Salisbury suggested.

"Oh, Mabel never would have touched the piano without their permission," Justine said quickly, with a little resentful flush.

"You mean that they are perfectly willing to have her use it?" Mrs. Salisbury asked.

"Oh, quite!"

"Have they *adopted* her?"

"Oh, no! No; Mabel is twenty-four or five."

"What's the doctor's name?"

"Mitchell. Dr. Quentin Mitchell. He's a member of the Burning Woods Club."

"A member of the *club*! And he allows—" Mrs. Salisbury did not finish her thought. "I don't want to say anything against your friend," she began again presently, "but for a girl in her position to waste her time studying music seems rather absurd to me. I thought the very idea of the college was to content girls with household positions."

"Well, she is going to be married next spring," Justine said, "and her husband is quite musical. He plays a church organ. I am going to dinner with them on Thursday, and then to the Galski concert. They're both quite music mad."



“Well, I hope he can afford to buy tickets for Gadski, but marriage is a pretty expensive business,” Mrs. Salisbury said pleasantly, “What is he, a chauffeur—a salesman?” To do her justice, she knew the question would not offend, for Justine, like any girl from a small town, was not fastidious as to the position of her friends; was very fond of the policeman on the corner and his pretty wife, and liked a chat with Mrs. Sargent’s chauffeur when occasion arose.

But the girl’s answer, in this case, was a masterly thrust.

“No; he’s something in a bank, Mrs. Salisbury. He’s paying teller in that little bank at Burton Corners, beyond Burning Woods. But, of course, he hopes for promotion; they all do. I believe he is trying to get into the River Falls Mutual Savings, but I’m not sure.”



Page 40

Mrs. Salisbury felt the blood in her face. Kane Salisbury had been in a bank when she married him; was cashier of the River Falls Mutual Savings Bank now.

She carried away the asters she had been arranging, without further remark. But Justine's attitude rankled. Mrs. Salisbury, absurd as she felt her own position to be, could not ignore the impertinence of her maid's point of view. Theoretically, what Justine thought mattered less than nothing. Actually it really made a great difference to the mistress of the house.

"I would like to put that girl in her place once!" thought Mrs. Salisbury. She began to wish that Justine would marry, and to envy those of her friends who were still struggling with untrained Maggies and Almas and Chloes. Whatever their faults, these girls were still *servants*, old-fashioned "help"—they drudged away at cooking and beds and sweeping all day, and rattled dishes far into the night.

The possibility of getting a second little maid occurred to her. She suggested it, tentatively, to Sandy.

"You couldn't, unless I'm mistaken, Mother," Sandy said briskly, eyeing a sandwich before she bit into it. The ladies were at luncheon. "For a graduate servant can't work with any but a graduate servant; that's the rule. At least I *think* it is!" And Sandy, turning toward the pantry, called: "Oh, Justine!"

"Justine," she asked, when the maid appeared, "isn't it true that you graduates can't work with untrained girls in the house?"

"That's the rule," Justine assented.

"And what does the school expect you to pay a second girl?" pursued the daughter of the house.

"Well, where there are no children, twenty dollars a month," said Justine, "with one dollar each for every person more than two in the family. Then, in that case, the head servant, as we call the cook, would get five dollars less a month. That is, I would get thirty-two dollars, and the assistant twenty-three."

"Gracious!" said Mrs. Salisbury. "Thank you, Justine. We were just asking. Fifty-five dollars for the two!" she ejaculated under her breath when the girl was gone. "Why, I could get a fine cook and waitress for less than that!"

And instantly the idea of two good maids instead of one graduated one possessed her. A fine cook in the kitchen, paid, say twenty-five, and a "second girl," paid sixteen. And none of these ridiculous and inflexible regulations! Ah, the satisfaction of healthily imposing upon a maid again, of rewarding that maid with the gift of a half-worn gown, as a peace offering—Mrs. Salisbury drew a long breath. The time had come for a change.



Mr. Salisbury, however, routed the idea with scorn. His wife had no argument hardy enough to survive the blighting breath of his astonishment. And Alexandra, casually approached, proved likewise unfavorable.

“I am certainly not furthering my own comfort alone in this, as you and Daddy seem inclined to think,” Mrs. Salisbury said severely to her daughter. “I feel that Justine’s system is an imposition upon you, dear. It isn’t right for a pretty girl of your age to be caught dusting the sitting-room, as Owen caught you yesterday. Daddy and I can keep a nice home, we keep a motor car, we put the boys in good schools, and it doesn’t seem fair—”



Page 41

“Oh, fair your grandmother!” Sandy broke in, with a breezy laugh. “If Owen Sargent doesn’t like it, he can just come *to*! Look at *his* mother, eating dinner the other day with four representatives of the Waitresses’ Union! Marching in a parade with dear knows who! Besides—”

“It is very different in Mrs. Sargent’s case, dear,” said Mrs. Salisbury simply. “She could afford to do anything, and consequently it doesn’t matter what she does! It doesn’t matter what you do, if you can afford not to. The point is that we can’t really afford a second maid.”

“I don’t see what that has to do with it!” said the girl of the coming generation cheerfully.

“It has *everything* to do with it,” the woman of the passing generation answered seriously.

“As far as Owen goes,” Sandy went on thoughtfully, “I’m only too much afraid he’s the other way. What do you suppose he’s going to do now? He’s going to establish a little Neighborhood House for boys down on River Street, ‘The Cyrus Sargent Memorial.’ And, if you please, he’s going to *live* there! It’s a ducky house; he showed me the blue-prints, with the darlinest apartment for himself you ever saw, and a plunge, and a roof gymnasium. It’s going to cost, endowment and all, three hundred thousand dollars—”

“Good heavens!” Mrs. Salisbury said, as one stricken.

“And the worst of it is,” Alexandra pursued, with a sympathetic laugh for her mother’s concern, “that he’ll meet some Madonna-eyed little factory girl or laundry worker down there and feel that he owes it to her to—”

“To break your heart, Sandy,” the mother supplied, all tender solicitude.

“It’s not so much a question of my heart,” Sandy answered composedly, “as it is a question of his entire life. It’s so unnecessary and senseless!”

“And you can sit there calmly discussing it!” Mrs. Salisbury said, thoroughly out of temper with the entire scheme of things mundane. “Upon my word, I never saw or heard anything like it!” she observed. “I wonder that you don’t quietly tell Owen that you care for him— but it’s too dreadful to joke about! I give you up!”

And she rose from her chair, and went quickly out of the room, every line in her erect little figure expressing exasperation and inflexibility. Sandy, smiling sleepily, reopened an interrupted novel. But she stared over the open page into space for a few moments, and finally spoke:

“Upon my word, I don’t know that that’s at all a bad idea!” an interrupted novel. But she stared over the open page into space for a few moments, and finally spoke:



“Upon my word, I don’t know that that’s at all a bad idea!”

CHAPTER V

Mrs. Salisbury,” said Justine, when her mistress came into the kitchen one December morning, “I’ve had a note from Mrs. Sargent—”

“From Mrs. Sargent?” Mrs. Salisbury repeated, astonished. And to herself she said: “She’s trying to get Justine away from me!”

Page 42

“She writes as Chairman of the Department of Civics of the Forum Club,” pursued Justine, referring to the letter she held in her hand, “to ask me if I will address the club some Thursday on the subject of the College of Domestic Science. I know that you expect to give a card party some Thursday, and I thought I would make sure just which one you meant.”

Mrs. Salisbury, taken entirely unaware, was actually speechless for a moment. The Forum was, of all her clubs, the one in which membership was most prized by the women of River Falls. It was not a large club, and she had longed for many years somehow to place her name among the eighty on its roll. The richest and most exclusive women of River Falls belonged to the Forum Club; its few rooms, situated in the business part of town, and handsomely but plainly furnished, were full of subtle reminders that here was no mere social center; here responsible members of the recently enfranchised sex met to discuss civic betterment, schools and municipal budgets, commercialized vice and child labor, library appropriations, liquor laws and sewer systems. Local politicians were beginning to respect the Forum, local newspapers reported its conventions, printed its communications.

Mrs. Salisbury was really a little bit out of place among the clever, serious young doctors, the architects, lawyers, philanthropists and writers who belonged to the club. But her membership therein was one of the things in which she felt an unalloyed satisfaction. If the discussions ever secretly bored or puzzled her, she was quite clever enough to conceal it. She sat, her handsome face, under its handsome hat, turned toward the speaker, her bright eyes immovable as she listened to reports and expositions. And, after the motion to adjourn had been duly made, she had her reward. Rich women, brilliant women, famous women chatted with her cordially as the Forum Club streamed downstairs. She was asked to luncheons, to teas; she was whirled home in the limousines of her fellow-members. No other one thing in her life seemed to Mrs. Salisbury as definite a social triumph as was her membership in the Forum.

Her election had come about simply enough, after years of secret longing to become a member. Sandy, who was about twelve at the time, during a call from Mrs. Sargent, had said innocently:

“Why haven’t you ever joined the Forum, Mother?”

“Why, yes; why not?” Mrs. Sargent had added.

This gave Mrs. Salisbury an opportunity to say:

“Well, I have been a very busy woman, and couldn’t have done so, with these three dear children to watch. But, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Sargent, I have never been asked. At least,” she went on scrupulously, “I am almost sure I never have been!” The



implication being that the Forum's card of invitation might have been overlooked for more important affairs.

"I'll send you another," the great lady had said at once. "You're just the sort we need," Mrs. Sargent had continued. "We've got enough widows and single women in now; what we want are the real mothers, who need shaking out of the groove!"



Page 43

Mrs. Sargent happened to be President of the Club at that time, so Mrs. Salisbury had only to ignore graciously the rather offensive phrasing of the invitation, and to await the news of her election, which duly and promptly arrived.

And now Justine had been asked to speak at the Forum! It was the most distasteful bit of information that had come Mrs. Salisbury's way in a long, long time! She felt in her heart a stinging resentment against Mrs. Sargent, with her mad notions of equality, and against Justine, who was so complacently and contentedly accepting this monstrous state of affairs.

"That is very kind of Mrs. Sargent," said she, fighting for dignity; "she is very much interested in working girls and their problems, and I suppose she thinks this might be a good advertisement for the school, too." This idea had just come to Mrs. Salisbury, and she found it vaguely soothing. "But I don't like the idea," she ended firmly; "it—it seems very odd, very—very conspicuous. I should prefer you not to consider anything of the kind."

"I should prefer" was said in the tone that means "I command," yet Justine was not satisfied.

"Oh, but why?" she asked.

"If you force me to discuss it," said Mrs. Salisbury, in sudden anger, "because you are my maid! My gracious, *you are my maid*," she repeated, pent-up irritation finding an outlet at last. "There is such a relationship as mistress and maid, after all! While you are in my house you will do as I say. It is the mistress's place to give orders, not to take them, not to have to argue and defend herself—"

"Certainly, if it is a question about the work the maid is supposed to do," Justine defended herself, with more spirit than the other woman had seen her show before. "But what she does with her leisure--why it's just the same as what a clerk does with his leisure, nobody questions it, nobody—"

"I tell you that I will not stand here and argue with you," said Mrs. Salisbury, with more dignity in her tone than in her words. "I say that I don't care to have my maid exploited by a lot of fashionable women at a club, and that ends it! And I must add," she went on, "that I am extremely surprised that Mrs. Sargent should approach you in such a matter, without consulting me!"

"The relationship of mistress and maid," Justine said slowly, "is what has always made the trouble. Men have decided what they want done in their offices, and never have any trouble in finding boys to fill the vacancies. But women expect—"



“I really don’t care to listen to any further theories from that extraordinary school,” said Mrs. Salisbury decidedly. “I have told you what I expect you to do, and I know you are too sensible a girl to throw away a good position—”

“Mrs. Salisbury, if I intended to say anything in such a little talk that would reflect on this family, or even to mention it, it would be different, but, as it is—”



Page 44

"I should hope you *wouldn't* mention this family!" Mrs. Salisbury said hotly. "But even without that—"

"It would be merely an outline of what the school is, and what it tries to do," Justine interposed. "Miss Holley, our founder and President, was most anxious to have us interest the general public in this way, if ever we got a chance."

"What Miss Holley—whoever she is—wanted, or wants, is nothing to me!" Mrs. Salisbury said magnificently. "You know what I feel about this matter, and I have nothing more to say."

She left the kitchen on the very end of the last word, and Justine, perforce not answering, hoped that the affair was concluded, once and for all.

"For Mrs. Sargent may think she can exasperate me by patronizing my maid," said Mrs. Salisbury guardedly, when telling her husband and daughter of the affair that evening, "but there is a limit to everything, and I have had about enough of this efficiency business!"

"I can only beg, Mother dear, that you won't have a row with Owen's dear little vacillating, weak-minded ma," said Sandy cheerfully.

"No; but, seriously, don't you both think it's outrageous?" Mrs. Salisbury asked, looking from one to the other.

"No-o; I see the girl's point," Kane Salisbury said thoughtfully. "What she does with her afternoons off is her own affair, after all; and you can't blame her, if a chance to step out of the groove comes along, for taking advantage of it. Strictly, you have no call to interfere."

"Legally, perhaps I haven't," his wife conceded calmly. "But, thank goodness, my home is not yet a court of law. Besides, Daddy, if one of the young men in the bank did something of which you disapproved, you would feel privileged to interfere."

"If he did something *wrong*, Sally, not otherwise."

"And you would be perfectly satisfied to meet your janitor somewhere at dinner?"

"No; the janitor's colored, to begin with, and, more than that, he isn't the type one meets. But, if he qualified otherwise, I wouldn't mind meeting him just because he happened to be the janitor. Now, young Forrest turns up at the club for golf, and Sandy and I picked Fred Hall up the other day, coming back from the river." Kane Salisbury, leaning back in his chair, watched the rings of smoke that rose from his cigar. "It's a funny thing about you women," he said lazily. "You keep wondering why smart girls won't go into housework, and yet, if you get a girl who isn't a mere stupid machine, you



resent every sign she gives of being an intelligent human being. No two of you keep house alike, and you jump on the girl the instant she hangs a dish towel up the way you don't. It's you women who make life so hard for each other. Now, if any decent man saw a young fellow at the bottom of the ladder, who was as good and clever and industrious as Justine is, he'd be glad to give him a hand up. But no; that means she's above her work, and has to be snubbed."



Page 45

"Don't talk so cynically, Daddy dear," Mrs. Salisbury said, smiling over her fancy work, as one only half listening.

"I tell you, a change is coming in all these things, Sally," said the cynic, unruffled.

"You bet there is!" his daughter seconded him from the favorite low seat that permitted her to rest her mouse-colored head against his knee.

"Your mother's a conservative, Sandy," pursued the man of the house, encouraged, "but there's going to be some domestic revolutionizing in the next few years. It's hard enough to get a maid now; pretty soon it'll be impossible. Then you women will have to sit down and work the thing out, and ask yourselves why young American girls won't come into your homes, and eat the best food in the land, and get well paid for what they do. You'll have to reduce the work of an American home to a system, that's all, and what you want done that isn't provided for in that system you'll have to do yourselves. There's something in the way you treat a girl now, or in what you expect her to do, that's all wrong!"

"It isn't a question of too much work," Mrs. Salisbury said. "They are much better off when they're worked hard. And I notice that your bookkeepers are kept pretty busy, Kane," she added neatly.

"For an eight-hour day, Sally. But you expect a twelve or fourteen-hour day from your housemaid—"

"If I pay a maid thirty-seven and a half dollars a month," his wife averred, with precision, "I expect her to do something for that thirty-seven dollars and a half!"

"Well, but, Mother, she does!" Alexandra contributed eagerly. "In Justine's case she does an awful lot! She plans, and saves, and thinks about things. Sometimes she sits writing menus and crossing things out for an hour at a time."

"And then Justine's a pioneer; in a way she's an experiment," the man said.

"Experiments are always expensive. That's why the club is interested, I suppose. But in a few years probably the woods will be full of graduate servants—everyone'll have one! They'll have their clubs and their plans together, and that will solve some of the social side of the old trouble. They—"

"Still, I notice that Mrs. Sargent herself doesn't employ graduate servants!" Mrs. Salisbury, who had been following a wandering line of thought, threw in darkly.

"Because they haven't any graduates for homes like hers, Mother," Alexandra supplied. "She keeps eight or nine housemaids. The college is only to supply the average home, don't you see? Where only one or two are kept—that's their idea."



“And do they suppose that the average American woman is willing to go right on paying thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents for a maid?” Mrs. Salisbury asked mildly.

“For five in family, Mother! Justine would only be thirty if three dear little strangers hadn’t come to brighten your home,” Sandy reminded her. “Besides,” she went on, “Justine was telling me only a day or two ago of their latest scheme—they are arranging so that a girl can manage two houses in the same neighborhood. She gets breakfast for the Joneses, say; leaves at nine for market; orders for both families; goes to the Smiths and serves their hearty meal at noon; goes back to the Joneses at five, and serves dinner.”

Page 46

“And what does she get for all this?” Mrs. Salisbury asked in a skeptical tone.

“The Joneses pay her twenty-five, I believe, and the Smiths fifteen for two in each family.”

“What’s to prevent the two families having all meals together,” Mrs. Salisbury asked, “instead of having to patch out with meals when they had no maid?”

“Well, I suppose they could. Then she’d get her original thirty, and five more for the two extra—you see, it comes out the same, thirty-five dollars a month. Perhaps families will pool their expenses that way some day. It would save buying, too, and table linen, and gas and fuel. And it would be fun! All at our house this month, and all at Aunt Mat’s next month!”

“There’s one serious objection to sharing a maid,” Mrs. Salisbury presently submitted; “she would tell the other family all your private business.”

“If they chose to pump her, she might,” Alexandra said, with unintentional rebuke, and Mr. Salisbury added amusedly:

“No, no, no, Mother! That’s an exploded theory. How much has Justine told you of her last place?”

“But that’s no proof she *wouldn’t*, Kane,” Mrs. Salisbury ended the talk by rising from her chair, taking another nearer the reading lamp, and opening a new magazine. “Justine is a sensible girl,” she added, after a moment. “I have always said that. When all the discussing and theorizing in the world is done, it comes down to this: a servant in my house shall do as I say. I have told her that I dislike this ridiculous club idea, and I expect to hear no more of the matter!”

There came a day in December when Mrs. Salisbury came home from the Forum Club in mid-afternoon. Her face was a little pale as she entered the house, her lips tightly set. It was a Thursday afternoon, and Justine’s kitchen was empty. Lettuce and peeled potatoes were growing crisp in yellow bowls of ice water, breaded cutlets were in the ice chest, a custard cooled in a north window.

Mrs. Salisbury walked rapidly through the lower rooms, came back to the library, and sat down at her desk. A fire was laid in the wide, comfortable fireplace, but she did not light it. She sat, hatted, veiled and gloved, staring fixedly ahead of her for some moments. Then she said aloud, in a firm but quiet voice: “Well, this positively *ends* it!”

A delicate film of dust obscured the shining surface of the writing table. Mrs. Salisbury’s mouth curved into a cold smile when she saw it; and again she spoke aloud.

“Thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents, indeed!” she said. “Ha!”



Nearly two hours later Alexandra rushed in. Alexandra looked her prettiest; she was wearing new furs for the first time; her face was radiantly fresh, under the sweep of her velvet hat. She found her mother stretched comfortably on the library couch with a book. Mrs. Salisbury smiled, and there was a certain placid triumph in her smile.



Page 47

“Here you are, Mother!” Alexandra burst out joyously. “Mother, I’ve just had the most extraordinary experience of my life!” She sat down beside the couch, her eyes dancing, her cheeks two roses, and pushed back her furs, and flung her gloves aside. “My dear,” said Alexandra, catching up the bunch of violets she held for an ecstatic sniff, and then dropping it in her lap again, “wait until I tell you—I’m engaged!”

“My darling girl—” Mrs. Salisbury said, rapturously, faintly.

“To Owen, of course,” Alexandra rushed on radiantly. “But wait until I tell you! It’s the most awful thing I ever did in my life, in a way,” she interrupted herself to say more soberly. Her voice died away, and her eyes grew dreamy.

Mrs. Salisbury’s heart, rising giddily to heaven on a swift rush of thanks, felt a cold check.

“How do you mean awful, dear?” she said apprehensively.

“Well, wait, and I’ll tell you,” Alexandra said, recalled and dimpling again. “I met Jim Vance and Owen this morning at about twelve, and Jim simply got red as a beet, and vanished—poor Jim!” The girl paid the tribute of a little sigh to the discarded suitor. “So then Owen asked me to lunch with him—right there in the Women’s exchange, so it was quite *comme il faut*, Mother,” she pursued, “and, my dear! he told me, as calmly as *that!*—that he might go to New York when Jim goes—Jim’s going to visit a lot of Eastern relatives!—so that he, Owen I mean, could study some Eastern settlement houses and get some ideas—”

“I think the country is going mad on this subject of settlement houses, and reforms, and hygiene!” Mrs. Salisbury said, with some sharpness. “However, go on!”

“Well, Owen spoke to me a little about—about Jim’s liking me, you know,” Alexandra continued. “You know Owen can get awfully red and choky over a thing like that,” she broke off to say animatedly. “But to-day he wasn’t—he was just brotherly and sweet. And, Mother, he got so confidential, you know, that I simply *pulled* my courage together, and I determined to talk honestly to him. I clasped my hands—I could see in one of the mirrors that I looked awfully nice, and that helped!—I clasped my hands, and I looked right into his eyes, and I said, quietly, you know, ‘Owen,’ I said ‘I’m going to tell you the truth. You ask me why I don’t care for Jim; this is the reason. I like you too much to care for any other man that way. I don’t want you to say anything now, Owen,’ I said, ‘or to think I expect you to tell me that you have always cared for me. That’d be too *Flat*. And I’m not going to say that I’ll never care for anyone else, for I’m only twenty, and I don’t know. But I couldn’t see so much of you, Owen,’ I said, ‘and not care for you, and it seems as natural to tell you so as it would for me to tell another girl. You worry sometimes because you can’t remember your father,’ I said, ‘and because your mother is so undemonstrative with you; but I want you to think, the next time you feel sort of out

of it, that there is a woman who really and truly thinks that you are the best man in the world—”



Page 48

Mrs. Salisbury had risen to a sitting position; her eyes, fixed upon her daughter's face, were filled with utter horror.

"You are not serious, my child!" she gasped. "Alexandra, tell me that this is some monstrous joke—"

"Serious! I never was more serious in my life," the girl said stoutly. "I said just that. It was easy enough, after I once got started. And I thought to myself, even then, that if he didn't care he'd be decent enough to say so honestly—"

"But, my child—my *child!*" the mother said, beside herself with outraged pride. "You cannot mean that you so far forgot a woman's natural delicacy—her natural shrinking—her dignity—Why, what must Owen think of you! Can't you see what a dreadful thing you've done, dear!" Her mind, working desperately for an escape from the unbearable situation, seized upon a possible explanation. "My darling," she said, "you must try at once to convince him that you were only joking—you can say half-laughingly—"

"But wait!" Alexandra interrupted, unruffled. "He put his hand over mine, and he turned as red as a beet—I wish you could have seen his face, Mother!—and he said—But," and the happy color flooded her face, "I honestly can't tell you what he said, Mother," Alexandra confessed. "Only it was *darling*, and he is honestly the best man I ever saw in my life!"

"But, dearest, dearest," her mother said, with desperate appeal. "Don't you see that you can't possibly allow things to remain this way? Your dignity, dear, the most precious thing a girl has, you've simply thrown it to the winds! Do you want Owen to remind you some day that *you* were the one to speak first?" Her voice sank distressfully, a shamed red burned in her cheeks. "Do you want Owen to be able to say that you cared, and admitted that you cared, before he did?"

Alexandra, staring blankly at her mother, now burst into a gay laugh.

"Oh, Mother, aren't you *darling*—but you're so funny!" she said. "Don't you suppose I know Owen well enough to know whether he cares for me or not? He doesn't know it himself, that's the whole point, or rather he *didn't*, for he does now! And he'll go on caring more and more every minute, you'll see! He might have been months finding it out, even if he didn't go off to New York with Jim, and marry some little designing dolly-mop of an actress, or some girl he met on the train. Owen's the sort of dear, big, old, blundering fellow that you have to *protect*, Mother. And it came up so naturally—if you'd been there—"

"I thank Heaven I was not there!" Mrs. Salisbury said feelingly. "Came up naturally! Alexandra, what are you *made* of? Where are your natural feelings? Why, do you realize that your Grandmother Porter kept your grandfather waiting three months for an



answer, even? She lived to be an old, old lady, and she used to say that a woman ought never let her husband know how much she cared for him, and Grandfather Porter *respected* and *admired* your grandmother until the day of her death!”



Page 49

“A dear, cold-blooded old lady she must have been!” said Alexandra, unimpressed.

“On the contrary,” Mrs. Salisbury said quickly. “She was a beautiful and dignified woman. And when your father first began to call upon me,” she went on impressively, “and Mattie teased me about him, I was so furious—my feelings were so outraged!—that I went upstairs and cried a whole evening, and wouldn’t see him for *days!*”

“Well, dearest,” Alexandra said cheerfully, “You may have been a perfect little lady, but it’s painfully evident that I take after the other side of the house! As for Owen ever having the nerve to suggest that I gave him a pretty broad hint—” the girl’s voice was carried away on a gale of cheerful laughter. “He’d get no dessert for weeks to come!” she threatened gaily. “You know I’m convinced, Mother,” Sandy went on more seriously, “that this business of a man’s doing all the asking is going out. When women have their own industrial freedom, and their own well-paid work, it’ll be a great compliment to suggest to a man that one’s willing to give everything up, and keep his house and raise his children for him. And if, for any reason, he *shouldn’t* care for that girl, she’ll not be embarrassed—”

Mrs. Salisbury shut her eyes, her face and form rigid, one hand spasmodically clutching the couch.

“Alexandra, I *beg*—” she said faintly, “I *entreat* that you will not expect me to listen to such outrageous and indelicate and *coarse*— yes, *coarse!*—theories! Think what you will, but don’t ask your mother—”

“Now, listen, darling,” Alexandra said soothingly, kneeling down and gathering her mother affectionately in her arms, “Owen did every bit of this except the very first second and, if you’ll just *forget it*, in a few months he’ll be thinking he did it all! Wait until you see him; he’s walking on air! He’s dazed. My dear”—the strain of happy confidence was running smoothly again—“my dear, we lunched together, and then we went out in the car to Burning Woods, and sat there on the porch, and talked and *talked*. It was perfectly wonderful! Now, he’s gone to tell his mother, but he’s coming back to take us all to dinner. Is that all right? And, Mother, that reminds me, we are going to live in the new Settlement House, and have a girl like Justine!”

“*What!*” Mrs. Salisbury said, smitten sick with disappointment.

“Or Justine herself, if you’ll let us have her,” Sandy went on. “You see, living in that big Sargent house—”

“Do you mean that Owen’s mother doesn’t want to give up that house?” Mrs. Salisbury asked coldly. “I thought it was Owen’s?”



“It *is* Owen’s, Mother, but fancy living there!” Sandy said vivaciously. “Why, I’d have to keep seven or eight maids, and do nothing but manage them, and do just as everyone else does!”

“You’d be the richest young matron in town,” her mother said bitterly.



Page 50

“Oh, I know, Mother, but that seems sort of mean to the other girls! Anyway, we’d much rather live in the ducky little Settlement house, and entertain our friends at the Club, do you see? And Justine is to run a little cooking school, do you see? For everyone says that management of food and money is the most important thing to teach the poorer class. Won’t that be great?”

“I personally can’t agree with you,” the mother said lifelessly. “Here I spend all my life since your babyhood trying to make friends for you among the nicest people, trying to establish our family upon an equal basis with much richer people, and you, instead of living as you should, with beautiful things about you, choose to go down to River Street, and drudge among the slums!”

“Oh, come, Mother; River Street is the breeziest, prettiest part of town, with the river and those fields opposite. Wait until we clean it up, and get some gardens going—”

“As for Justine, I am *done* with her,” continued the older woman dispassionately. “All this has rather put it out of my head, but I meant to tell you at once, she goes out of my house *this week*! Against my express wish, she was the guest of the Forum Club to-day. ‘Miss J. C. Harrison,’ the program said, and I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw Justine! She had on a black charmeuse gown, black velvet about her hair—and I was supposed to sit there and listen to my own maid! I slipped out; it was too much. To-morrow morning,” Mrs. Salisbury ended dramatically, “I dismiss her!”

“Mother!” said Alexandra, aghast. “What reason will you give her?”

“I shall give her no reason,” Mrs. Salisbury said sternly. “I am through with apologies to servants! To-morrow I shall apply at Crosby’s for a good, old-fashioned maid, who doesn’t have to have her daily bath, and doesn’t expect to be entertained at my club!”

“But, listen, darling,” Alexandra pleaded. “*Don’t* make a fuss now. Justine was my darling belle-mere’s guest to-day, don’t you see? It’ll be so awkward, scrapping right in the face of Owen’s news. Couldn’t you sort of shelve the Justine question for a while?”

“Dearie, be advised,” Mrs. Salisbury said, with solemn warning. “You *don’t* want a girl like that, dear. You will be a *somebody*, Sandy. You can’t do just what any other girl would do, as Owen Sargent’s wife! Don’t live with Mrs. Sargent if you don’t want to, but take a pretty house, dear. Have two or three little maids, in nice caps and aprons. Why, Alice Snow, whose husband is merely an automobile salesman, has a *lovely* home! It’s small, of course, but you could have your choice!”

“Well, nothing’s settled!” Alexandra rose to go upstairs, gathered her furs about her. “Only promise me to let Justine’s question stand,” she begged.

“Well,” Mrs. Salisbury consented unwillingly.

Page 51

“Ah, there’s Dad!” Alexandra cried suddenly, as the front door opened and shut. With a joyous rush, she flew to meet him, and Mrs. Salisbury could imagine, from the sounds she heard, exactly how Sandy and her great news and her furs and her father’s kisses were all mixed up together. “What—what—what—why, what am I going to do for a girl?” “Oh, Dad, darling, say that you’re glad!” “Luckiest fellow this side of the Rocky Mountains, and I’ll tell him so!” “And you and Mother to dine with us every week, promise that, Dad!”

She heard them settle down on the lowest step, Sandy obviously in her father’s lap; heard the steady murmur of confidence and advice.

“Wise girl, wise girl,” she heard the man’s voice say. “That keeps you in touch with life, Sandy; that’s real. And then, if some day you have reasons for wanting a bigger house and a more quiet neighborhood—” Several frantic kisses interrupted the speaker here, but he presently went on: “Why, you can always move! Meantime, you and Owen are helping less fortunate people, you’re building up a lot of wonderful associations—”

Well, it was all probably for the best; it would turn out quite satisfactorily for everyone, thought the mother, sitting in the darkening library, and staring rather drearily before her. Sandy would have children, and children must have big rooms and sunshine, if it can be managed possibly. The young Sargents would fall nicely into line, as householders, as parents, as hospitable members of society.

But it was all so different from her dreams, of a giddy, spoiled Sandy, the petted wife of an adoring rich man; a Sandy despotically and yet generously ruling servants, not consulting Justine as an equal, in a world of working women—

And she was not even to have the satisfaction of discharging Justine! The maid had her rights, her place in the scheme of things, her pride.

“I declare, times have changed!” Mrs. Salisbury said to herself involuntarily. She mused over the well-worn phrase; she had never used it herself before; its truth struck her forcibly for the first time.

“I remember my mother saying that,” thought she, “and how old-fashioned and conventional we thought her! I remember she said it when Mat and I went to dances, after we were married; it seemed almost wrong to her! Dear me! And I remember Ma’s horror when Mat went to a hospital for her first baby. ‘If there is a thing that belongs at home,’ Ma said, ‘it does seem to me it’s a baby!’ And my asking people to dinner by telephone, and the Fosters having two bathrooms in their house—Ma thought that such a ridiculous affectation! But what *would* she say now? For those things were only trifles, after all,” Mrs. Salisbury sighed, in all honesty. “But *now*, why, the world is simply being turned upside down with these crazy new notions!” And again she paused,

surprised to hear herself using another old, familiar phrase. “Ma used to say that very thing, too,” said Mrs. Salisbury to herself. “Poor Ma!”

Page 52

The end